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SONS OF THE SOIL

Studies of the Indian Cultivator

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INTRODUCTION

THE quick-travelling business man, looking from the windows of a railway carriage, sees the Indian cultivator ploughing or drawing water from his well, or perhaps like the Scots peasant in Burns' 'Cotter's Saturday Night', collecting 'his spades, his mattocks and his hoes', and wearily bending his course homeward. He is India outside of the towns.

He is mentioned in speeches, leaders, lectures and poems usually more as a type than a person. The object of the following sketches is to give some clear outlines in place of this vagueness, and especially to show the variety of individuals and classes who cultivate the soil of this great country.

India's immensity and diversity are only known to those who have travelled over it. One man's India is not another man's India. It is no uncommon thing to hear some one say of a particular area: 'This is not India', meaning simply that it differs markedly from that part in which he has hitherto passed his life. Hence the folly of generalization. At the same time, there is a family resemblance between these cultivator types, a resemblance that grows as one reads the life-story and daily routine of one son of the soil after another.

There is the same plainness of life, the same wrestling with uncertainties of climate (except in favoured areas), the same love of simple games, sport and songs, the same religious background, the same neighbourly helpfulness, and the same financial indebtedness.

It is these and similar characteristics which it has been the object of this series of articles to portray. The

inspiration for them was Edmund Candler's admirable book, *The Sepoy*, in which he dealt with the various types which formed the Indian Army when he wrote, about the end of the last war. With the idea of putting together a similar description of types of the Indian cultivator, Directors of Agriculture of the various provinces in India were addressed and asked to arrange for the writing of these articles by competent people who knew the cultivators intimately, and particularly to endeavour to get really good photographs, with as much character in them as possible. It is believed that the gallery of portraits now presented is the first of its kind. Naturally they vary in quality and representativeness, but one or two are outstanding both as pictures and as character studies. Without in any way making invidious comparisons, one would draw attention to the portraits of the Lingayat of Bombay, the Jat of the United Provinces, the Gavara cultivator of Madras, and the Hindu cultivator of Bengal, the last-named having a quality reminiscent of Rodin.

There is an article on the cultivator of Burma, so long a part of the Indian Empire. It has not been possible in the time or space available to add articles on the cultivators from the Indian States, though there are among these many equally interesting types.

For those who desire rows of figures or discussions of rural economics there are many publications. These sketches attempt no competition with such books but aim at giving an idea of the cultivator as a man, and not as an economic unit. It is hoped that they may be of use in many ways and perhaps, not least, in letting one half of India know how the other half lives.

I am greatly indebted to Mr F. M. de Mello, B.A., B.Sc. (Econ.), Editor of the publications of the Imperial

Council of Agricultural Research, who has undertaken and carried through all the work of putting these articles into book form.

W. BURNS

NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE rapid sale of the first and second impressions of this book has necessitated the preparation of a new edition. This differs from the previous one in having a chapter on the Kathiawar cultivator. Kathiawar is known to every schoolboy, if not by name, at least by its appearance on the map as the curious tongue-like projection, two-thirds of the way up India's west coast. It is a geographical entity (though divided into an amazing number of administrations) and its cultivators deserve the chapter devoted to them.

Press comment from India, Europe and America on the first edition has been universally favourable and the book has apparently filled a gap. With rural reconstruction so much in the air, it is hoped that this new edition will continue to prove useful to all those working for India's cultivators.

W. BURNS

I

THE MADRAS CULTIVATOR

1. The Gavara Ryot

By B. Ramiah Garu

A GAVARA ryot is a typical cultivator of the southern parts of the Vizagapatam district in the Province of Madras. The Anakapalli taluka may be said to be the stronghold of this community. In the municipality of Anakapalli itself, there is a part going by the name of 'Gavarapalem'. There are villages, hamlets or suburbs of villages with which the word 'Gavara' is associated, e.g. Gavaravaram, Gavarapeta and Gouripatnam. The Gavara is of average stature, well-built, and has a remarkable power of endurance for physical work. On account of the outdoor life the Gavaras lead during the greater part of the day, their men, women and children are generally healthy. The Gavara is a master of the art of garden cultivation, besides being a shrewd and intelligent arable farmer. Among intensive cultivators, he ranks next only to the class of gardeners who make a speciality of the growing of vegetables. Age-long experience has taught him to adjust the details of his operations in such a way that he and the other members of his family are kept engaged throughout the year and employ as little outside labour as possible. Thus, he incurs the minimum of cash expenditure and obtains the maximum of produce per unit of land. He also realizes better prices by selling his garden produce in the retail market himself or through other members of his family. Few other classes of ryots can compete with him, and the Gavaras as a rule are generally better off than other classes of

cultivators placed in a similar environment. Being an expert in his business, he is slow to be convinced of improvements; but when once convinced, he adopts them readily and intelligently.

Foremost among the crops in the growing of which he is an expert is sugarcane, and the cultivation of this crop is so closely associated with the Gavaras that wherever one sees sugarcane growing well, one may expect the village to be inhabited by the Gavaras. In villages where other castes live, the Gavara monopolizes the cultivation of this crop. The fact that the Vizagapatam district is the largest cane-growing area in the Madras Province, accounting as it does for about one-third of the total area in the province, is not a little due to his enterprise and keenness. He has not only spread cane cultivation far and wide in the district but also in the neighbouring districts of East and West Godavari, in some parts of which cane cultivation is of recent introduction. Cases have been traced in which the Gavaras emigrating temporarily to these districts as casual coolies in a bad season remained there, being attracted by the higher wages and permanent employment. Having saved some money, he became a tenant cultivator, introducing sugarcane and other crops, and finally purchased the holding and settled down permanently.

He is fond of other crops, too, including *ragi* (*Eleusine coracana*), onions, seed crops, root crops such as sweet potatoes, Dioscorea, elephant foot yam, Colocasia, ginger and different kinds of vegetables. Among fruit trees he has developed the cultivation of guavas around Anakapalli to a remarkable extent. He looks after his cattle well and often makes money by purchasing young calves or buffaloes, rearing them and selling them after working them in his own fields for a season or two.

Industry and economy in his calling are not his only merits. He is frugal in his domestic life, having little time to indulge in costly habits and pursuits. His food is simple and consists mainly of his own produce; although he eats some rice and *ganti* (*Pennisetum typhoideum*), his staple food is *ragi* which he produces on wet, dry and garden lands. Being generally above want, the Gavara ryot consumes more meat and fish than other cultivating classes. In some places cotton is grown and hand-spun into yarn, but the practice is, of late, going out. The woman, as already stated, works in the field, and the children also as soon as they are about five or six years old. In fact, she may be said to be the maker of the Gavara's fortune, for without her cooperation, the Gavara could not have risen to his present position as an economic and efficient cultivator. While at home, the woman attends to dairying and earns a fair income thereby.

In respect of education the Gavaras are rather backward. As the children are needed in the field from a very early age, few can afford to send them to school without upsetting their domestic and farm arrangements. There are very few people in Government service, high or low. Of late, attempts are, however, being made to improve their education. A Gavara Association has been formed at Anakapalli and is doing considerable propaganda to uplift the community.

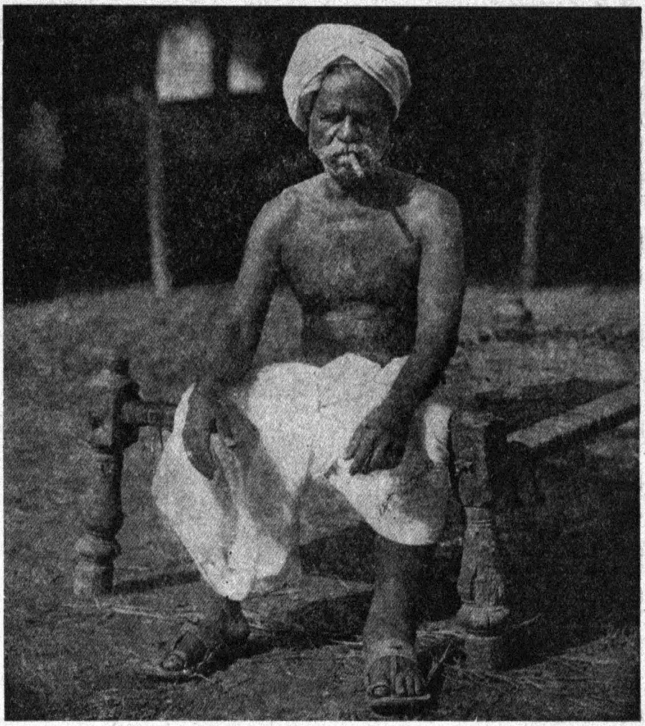
The Gavaras are generally simple and of upright character. They mind their own work and do not interfere with others, but when they are interfered with, they are assertive and aggressive in safeguarding their rights and interests. They are loath to go to litigation, and rarely fall a prey to the wiles of lawyers' touts or to party feelings. Since the institution of taluka board

which were, however, shortlived, some of the well-to-do Gavaras have begun to enter politics, a field which is new to them. They spend, however, very little of their own money on politics.

There is nothing particular to be said about the games and amusements of the Gavaras, which are generally the same as those of other agricultural communities. Model ploughs and *piccotahs* are among the toys of young children, indicating the interest taken by them in garden cultivation even at an early age.

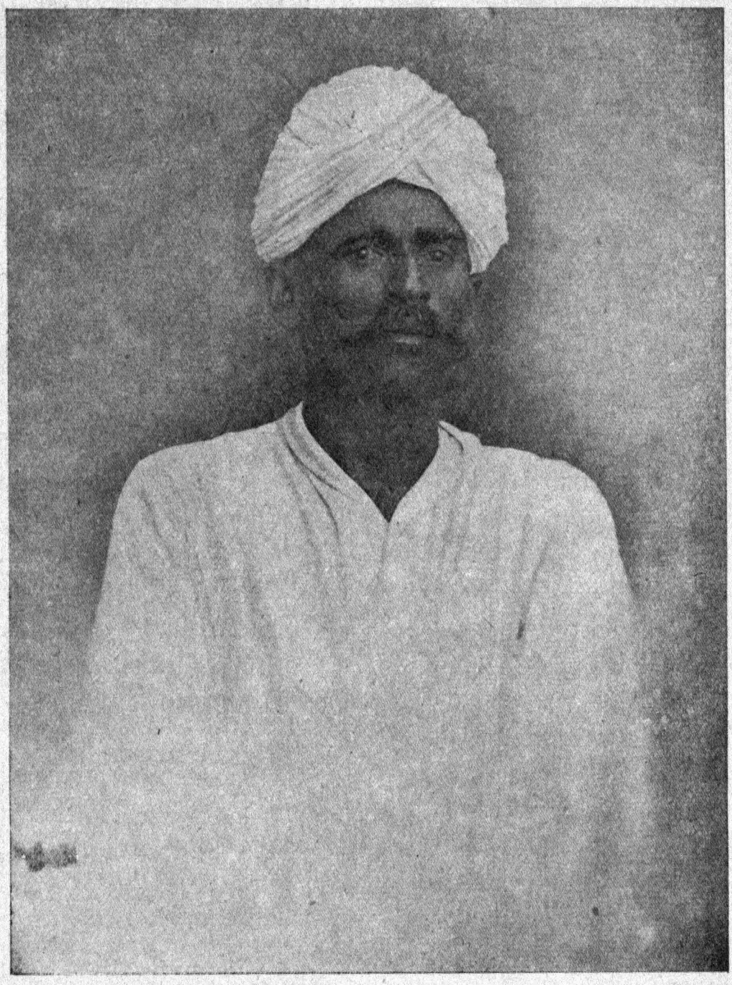
The Gavaras take part freely in the village festivals along with other communities and offer annual sacrifices, but of late these are being discouraged. There is one festival, however, which is specially celebrated by the community, namely the Jagannaikulu festival which falls in June-July. This is suggestive of the association of the community with Oriyas at some distant date (Jagannadha Bhakta). To the worship of the Brahmini bull the utmost importance is attached. Every village keeps or maintains a bull which is taken in procession during the *Sankranti* festival.

Marriage and other ceremonies are similar to those of other communities. The bride in most cases gets presents to the extent of three tolas of gold and 60 to 80 tolas of silver in the shape of ornaments, while the presents given to the bridegroom are worth about half of this Divorce and widow remarriage are allowed in this community.



A Gavara ryot

[PLATE 1



A Ceded Districts royt

[PLATE 2

2. The Ceded Districts Ryot*

By U. Vittal Rao

IN spite of over a century of peace, the Ceded Districts ryot retains the traditional sturdiness of his forefathers. This may be attributed to his continuous struggle with the forces of nature. He is simple and frank in disposition and generally peaceful, but when roused by village factions he sometimes goes to extremes. In his village houses are crowded together. There may or may not be a street in the village, but a narrow winding path is common. Traces of old fortified walls and a gateway into the village are often visible. His house is constructed of rough stone in mud, plastered with mud inside, but rarely outside. The roof is flat and is built on rafters over which, on a layer of straw, alkaline earth is spread. A circular hole is left in the roof for light and ventilation and this is covered by a pot in the rainy season to keep out the rain. The roof serves as a place for storing miscellaneous articles. Windows are usually absent. There is sometimes a narrow front verandah. The front of the house is reserved for cattle, which usually consist of a pair of bullocks, a cow or a she-buffalo and a few sheep. The rear part of the house is elevated and consists of one or two rooms which are used for the ryot and his family. The only articles of furniture are two or three bamboo rope cots. His utensils are chiefly mud pots. There may or may not be a hurricane lantern. These and agricultural implements are all that are to be seen inside.

* At the end of the Third Mysore War, the Nizam by treaty was in possession of the country now covered by the districts of Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool and Cuddapah. Owing, however, to the unsettled state of his territories, a subsidiary British force was stationed in the Nizam's Dominions in exchange for which four districts were handed over to the British. These four districts of Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool and Cuddapah are still known as the Ceded Districts.

The ryot's staple food consists of millets called *jonna* (*Andropogon Sorghum*), *korra* (*Setaria italica*), *ragi* (*Eleusine coracana*), *sajja* (*Pennisetum typhoideum*) and *samai* (*Panicum miliare*). Rice is eaten occasionally. Millets are usually pounded and cooked like rice, except *ragi*, which is ground. It is flavoured with a vegetable curry when vegetables are available, but this is rare. These foods are also commonly used in making *rotti*—roasted cake. The latter is taken with a bit of chutney. The ryot's curry and chutney are highly spiced with chillies. Meat is taken only on festive occasions and is obtained from stock on the farm. The ryot usually takes three meals a day—one in the early morning before he starts work, one at midday and the third at dusk. He usually finishes this off with a cup of water or buttermilk. He is very fond of his *bidi* (Indian cigarette) and chews tobacco occasionally. His womenfolk are fond of chewing betel leaf. Though not generally addicted to alcohol, he likes a drink if it comes his way.

Owing to scarcity of water he cannot take a bath more often than once a week and this he usually does on a *shandy* (market) day. His chief source of water is the pond wherein rain water collects. Most of this is used for drinking purposes till it becomes muddy. Wells are few and far between and it is not unusual for him and his folk to walk miles for water. Mainly owing to scarcity of water and its contamination, the Ceded Districts ryot suffers a good deal from guinea-worm.

The chief articles of clothing are the *dhoti* and a large white turban. A shirt is common nowadays. A pair of thick-soled sandals and a stick complete his dress. During winter he will carry a locally-woven woollen *kambli* or shawl. His womenfolk dress in a *sari* and a tight-fitting jacket. The end of the *sari* is often turned

over the head. The favourite colours are black or brown with red or yellow mixtures.

He does not indulge in any special games. He is fond, however, of *uppuata*, a game played with stones on a design. He is fond of stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, especially when depicted in drama. He has been known to yoke his cart and to travel ten to fifteen miles to see such shows. At night Rama *bhajan*, i.e. the singing of devotional songs and dances, by the light of an oil lamp, is common in many villages. His children take part in *kolattam*, hide-and-seek, marbles and similar games. The game of *kolattam* is played by twelve girls forming themselves into two circles, each consisting of six. The outer circle remains stationary while the inner circle moves in a clockwise direction. While thus in motion each girl from the outer circle exchanges places with one in the inner circle and when completed the players again return to their original places. A *jada* is thus formed. In order to undo the *jada* the inner circle moves in an *anti*-clockwise direction and the girls exchange the places as before, but in the reverse order.

Hindu by religion, he reveres the orthodox gods in a general way. But Hanuman is his favourite god to whom he pays real worship and homage. Hanuman shrines are common in all villages. Desire for the worship of village deities is also strong in him, Mariamma and Durgamma being the chief, to whom he offers animal sacrifices. Trees such as peepul (*Ficus religiosa*), margosa (*Melia indica*) and *vanni* (*Prosopis Spicigera*) and snake stones are also occasionally worshipped. Visits to distant shrines are common and undertaken chiefly for the purpose of securing protection against sickness.

Telugu is his mother-tongue, and he also understands Hindustani to some extent. He shows little aptitude for

the three Rs and the tract is the most backward in the province in the matter of literacy.

Nature has endowed him with by no means the best of conditions for agriculture. The rainfall is light and often fails. His soil, if it is black, is rich, but it has seldom been called upon to do its best; if red, it is often poor and infested by weeds. His holdings are large, scattered and sometimes far away from the village. The number of his cattle is small and is limited to the fodder that he can grow. Agriculture under these conditions requires perhaps good fortune more than skill and knowledge. However, he understands the husbandry of the soil and he is skilled in making the maximum use of a scanty rainfall. The genius of the Ceded Districts ryot is seen in the implements that he uses. In point of simplicity, efficiency and cheapness they are probably not equalled anywhere in the world.

Except the harvest, all agricultural operations are done with bullock-power. His skill in handling implements and cattle is unrivalled. He can sow crops in lines with great skill. His rich agricultural experience is embodied in numerous proverbs, and the following are a few typical ones, though the force of the original is lost in the translation:

'Wait till *uttara*: if there be no rain in that period, prepare yourself to start, and if there be no rain even in *visaka*, quit your house.'

'The season for sowing closes with *ardra*.'

'A field without a tree is like a village without relatives.'

In such adverse climatic conditions, it is not to be wondered at that the Ceded Districts ryot is poor, for years of scarcity follow one another at short intervals. At the worst, his borrowings may result in his becoming a landless labourer. Nevertheless, he lives and works on,

though it needs a stout heart to do so. The Ceded Districts ryot is possessed of one.

3. The Kistna Delta Ryot

By T. Budhavidheya Rao Naidu Garu

THE Delta ryot is generally frugal in dress and habits, with a cloth tied to the waist down to his knees and another wrapped round his head. He is generally quiet and slow in movement, going about with a long bamboo stick in his hand. He generally goes out with an umbrella to inspect the fields. He is by nature easy-going but exerts himself sufficiently during the planting and harvesting seasons. In the off-season he has little to do. His wants are few—he has two full meals a day besides breakfast which consists of cold rice and buttermilk with green chilli or onion or a chutney. Rice, of course, is his staple food, with soup or curry, and his meals always end with buttermilk and rice. He bathes daily and uses a few clothes but gets them washed daily. He spends some time in playing cards during the day and takes delight in smoking and in hearing a Puranic story read by a friend. He is not averse to getting into the civil courts or quarrelling in the distribution of water to fields.

As the soils in the delta areas are mostly clayey and moist, he keeps small or average animals, but they are not generally in very good condition. Generally a pair of work-animals is maintained for about ten acres under cultivation besides two she-buffaloes for milk and a double-bullock cart for transport of the produce from the fields. He is an expert at levelling, trimming *bunds* and winnowing grain. He sometimes engages himself in making ropes for cattle and other purposes during the day. Early to bed and early to rise is his motto and he starts work particularly early during the harvest season.

During winter he covers himself with a thick sheet of cloth folded double and passing over his head. The Delta ryot generally lives in a tiled house, unless his holding is small and he is poor. With the increase of population the size of his holding nowadays is getting smaller, so much so that the average holding may be anything between two and eight acres. When paddy was fetching a high price the Delta ryot was proud of his holding. At that time most of the ryots got into debt and spent much on marriages, etc., but with the fall in the price of grain and consequently of land, they were impoverished. There is, however, a change in his attitude. He is now trying to produce more and reduce his expenditure; it will take time, however, before he is well off again.

A Kistna Delta ryot

[PLATE 3

A Kunbi cultivator of Gujarat

[PLATE 4

II

THE BOMBAY CULTIVATOR

1. The Kunbi of Gujarat

By B. S. Patel

GUJARAT is the northern part of the Bombay Province and comprises the four British districts of Surat, Broach and Panch Mahals (now one district), Kaira and Ahmedabad, and portions of the Baroda State, whose territory is more or less intermingled with the four British districts.

The soil is alluvial in origin and rich. The soils of Broach and Surat districts are of the heavy black cotton type, Surat soils being heavier. In the Surat tract, there is garden soil of recent origin on the banks of the rivers, and this is used for irrigated crops. The soils of the Kaira and Ahmedabad districts are of lighter colour and vary from clay-loam to sandy types. They are well drained and well supplied with underground water which is fully utilized by means of wells for growing tobacco and vegetable crops. The type of farming followed is cereal farming mixed with dairying.

Gujarat depends upon the south-west monsoon for its rains which fall between June and October. The southern part receives 40 to 60 inches of rain and is practically free from famine. The central part receives 30 to 40 inches of rain, whilst North Gujarat receives 20 to 30 inches of rain and is liable to scarcity. The northern and eastern parts of Gujarat are liable to occasional frost in the cold weather.

The cultivators of Gujarat include many classes, the chief being the Leva Kunbis or Patidars, Kadva Kunbis,

Anavils, Bohoras, Kachhias, Rajputs, Kolis, Parsis, Mussulmans, Bhils, and Dublas. Of all these, the Kunbi is common to all districts of Gujarat and is the most important type. He is by far the best cultivator. It is the Kunbi who has made Gujarat so productive as to be called the Garden of Western India. The character of the soil in Kunbi holdings has been improved by a long course of careful husbandry. Sandy portions near Nadiad, Borsad, and Anand in Kaira district have been converted by the intelligent ryots into garden land. Similarly, the heavy and rather impervious cotton soils of the Surat tract have been made fertile by the hard work of the Kunbi.

The Kunbi is nowadays a peasant proprietor. Formerly the Kunbis in Kaira and Broach held the village land jointly on *narva* or *bhagdari* tenures. Under *narva* or *bhagdari* tenures, the village community, i.e. those who shared the village lands, settled hereditarily and jointly for the payment of the revenue assessment to the Government. In *bhagdari* villages revenue was fixed on each field, whereas in the *narva* tenure, the revenue was fixed in the lump for the village and its division left to the co-sharers. This was possible as the village was originally owned by one person. As the population increased, joint ownership continued for some generations, but eventually, owing to the great increase in population and to internal strife and jealousy, the *ryotwari* tenure has been preferred by the Kunbi.

The Kunbi lives in a group in a village even now, as he is apprehensive of robbers, and so he has often to live several miles away from his holdings. The village is generally built in the centre of the cultivated area and has a tank and a well for common use. Near the tank and in front of the village, there is an open space

shaded with trees, which is used as a playground for the village youths and a resting place for travellers. In this open space, round some aged tree, there is a raised platform made of earth and bricks. On this platform the village elders assemble at night for smoking the *hookah* and for talk.

The Kunbi lives in a comparatively well-built house, two or three storeys high. The houses, constructed of bricks and tiles, are built in rows of three or four, each group having a common courtyard and a gate. Cattle are tied in the courtyard and, in southern Gujarat, the ground floor of the house is shared by the cultivator and his cattle. This practice tends to make the dwelling insanitary. The ground floor has two rooms—the inner and the outer. The house has two main doors, one opening into the backyard, and the other opening into the courtyard. There is also a door between the inner and the outer rooms. In some cases the backyard is enclosed to provide a kitchen. Houses are not properly lighted and ventilated, particularly when the main doors are closed, and were it not for the Kunbi and his family working the whole day in the open, they would suffer in health.

Physically the Kunbi is of medium stature and build. He is fairly hardy and is inured to the toil and hardship associated with farming. He is sober, quiet, industrious, enterprising and frugal, except on special occasions such as marriage and death ceremonies, when he spends rather beyond his means, vying with his richer brethren. He is very hospitable, frank by nature, simple in his habits and is a good husband and father.

His dress consists of a piece of white cloth wrapped round his head by way of turban, a *bandi* (a coat up to the waist) and a *dhoti* covering his legs. Better classes of Kunbis, particularly the Patidars of Kaira, dress

themselves more elaborately by wearing the *angarkha* (long coat) and a turban.

The Kunbi's food consists of coarse rice, *tur-dal*, *bajri* or *jowar* bread, and a few vegetables, usually grown by himself. Though every Kunbi keeps a milch buffalo or two, he cannot afford much ghee (clarified butter), which he takes very sparingly. Even milk is not taken daily. It is stated that he does not give sufficient to his children as he is able to sell his milk readily. This is partially true in some cases; in other cases, it is due to the ignorance of the Kunbi as to the correct value of milk for growing children. However, he takes plenty of butter-milk, either by using it in preparing porridge of *bajri* or *jowar* flour, or by making it into curry, or drinking it with his meals. The Kunbis of Broach and Surat, as a rule, have taken to tea-drinking twice or thrice a day, but few people in other parts have acquired this habit. Tea is usually boiled black and served with a lot of sugar and some milk.

The Kunbi's amusements are unfortunately few and mainly comprise marriage parties, dramas seasoned by plenty of coarse wit, and attendance at a local fair or at a few friendly parties, where the delicacies of parched grain of *bajri*, *jowar*, or wheat, or *undhia* prepared from the bean, *Dolichos lablab*, are eaten.

The old village sports or games like *gedi dada* (a game played with a *babul* stick, shaped like a hockey stick, and a soft ball made of rags) and other Indian games played without any equipment are unfortunately becoming things of the past.

Another amusement common in the north is the *garba* dance, usually practised by men and women during the *Dusehra* week. In winter, there is often a recitation from the *Mahabharata* with musical accompaniment at night by a

party of *manbhats* (*man* being a big copper pot with a narrow mouth used by the party along with musical instruments) and such occasions are well attended by all, young and old, men and women.

Fortunately, the Kunbi is sober and does not indulge in the vice of drink. However, in certain parts the Kunbi has become a confirmed litigant, and is not a cheerful loser.

Agriculture in India is a hereditary calling, and a great deal of agricultural knowledge and skill has been developed in the Kunbi. His skill can be seen in the generally high standard of cleanliness of his lands, his careful repeated ploughings, abundant manuring, perfectly straight sowing, utilization of every little space available for crop production, the way in which rotation of crops is designed to build up and maintain soil fertility, and the long distances over which irrigation water from wells is conveyed across all sorts of obstacles to his cultivated fields. The Kunbi is very fond of his cattle, and he likes to tie them near or in his house so that he can feed them at night. Even the bullocks are carefully washed with hot water in the evening after a heavy day's work.

The Kunbi possesses a keen sense of the value of money and this plays an important part in the design of his field operations and in the methods of marketing his crops.

He knows his job so well that it is difficult to convince him of the utility of new improvements, but once he is convinced, he is not slow to take to them, even if it is necessary to invest large capital. This trait can be seen in the good and valuable livestock he keeps; in the quick and almost universal change over from *mhots* to oil-engines and pumps or to Persian wheels; in the growing of costly fruit crops, in adopting wider sowing

of crops like cotton, in taking to green manuring, and in the use of new artificial manures.

The Kunbis in the Surat tract are well organized and there are many cooperative groups of villages producing pure seed of improved varieties of cotton and marketing their cotton crop jointly.

In the days before the great famine of 1899-1900, the Gujarat Kunbi knew little of calamity. All his current resources were used up to tide over that big disaster. Since then, there have been many bad seasons forcing many people to migrate as labourers to the cotton mills at Ahmedabad, and to distant lands like East and South Africa to earn their living. This development has been helpful to people at home. The period of high prices during and after the last war helped to improve the condition of the farmer, but much of the profits then gained were spent on houses or in purchasing new land at very high prices. Like most other cultivators, the Kunbi carries a considerable weight of debt.

In addition, the pressure of population on the land has so much increased that the Kunbi has found it necessary to take to other trades and professions. Yet he prefers agriculture and it is mostly the Kunbi who has ventured to take up waste lands in Gujarat for large-scale cotton-growing and, in many cases, has migrated to Central India for agricultural purposes. Though he has paid high prices for such lands, he has almost invariably made a success of his agriculture wherever he has settled down on account of his inborn skill and industry.

2. The Lingayat of the Karnatak

By Rao Bahadur S. S. Salimath

THE Karnatak forms the southern portion of the Bombay Province and comprises the four districts

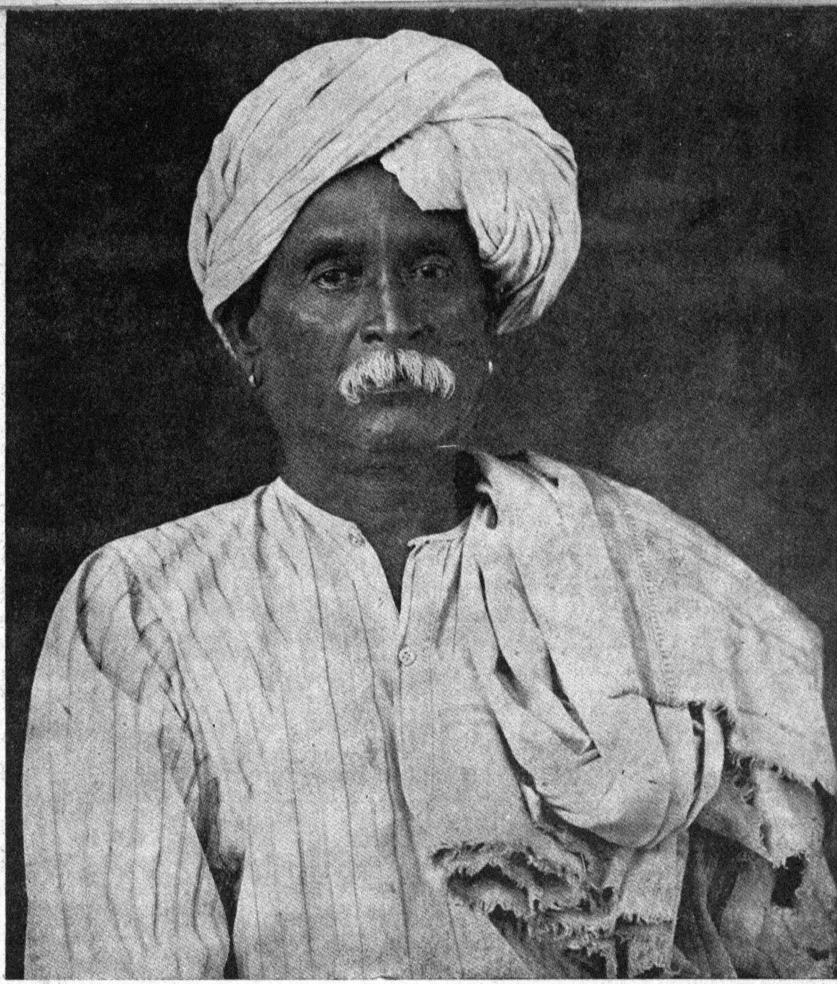
of Dharwar, Bijapur, Belgaum and North Kanara. Agriculturally it may be divided into two distinct tracts, viz. the 'Malnad' and the 'Baila-seemi'. The first is the western hilly tract with a large forest area and limited cultivation. The second is the extensive plain covering the central and eastern portion of the Karnatak. The latter is also known as the 'Yeri-nad' from the colour of its soil which is black.

The Malnad is comparatively a small tract. It has a heavy rainfall, ranging from 40 to 160 inches. Rice forms the main crop and is grown in terraced fields in the valleys. The Baila-seemi is by far the bigger and more important area. It extends over the whole of the Bijapur district and over two-thirds of Dharwar and Belgaum districts, covering an area of 11,800 square miles with a cultivated area of five-and-a-half million acres. It is favoured by both monsoons and has a total rainfall ranging from 20 to 40 inches. Its wet season thus extends over a period of eight months in the year. The rainfall is greater where this tract meets the Malnad but, towards the east, it decreases, and the crops are often subject to scarcity. The long wet season permits a wide range of *kharif* (early), *rabi* (late) and two-season crops. It is noted for its medium-stapled Kumta and Upland cottons.

The Karnatak cultivator belongs to a community called the Lingayat, which forms the bulk of the population. As a distinctive feature of his caste, the Lingayat wears constantly on his person a 'Linga' which is a religious symbol of the god Shiva. He is a strict vegetarian and total abstainer. For generations, farming has been his only profession, handed on by father to son. By tradition, training and religion, the Lingayat farmer is a son of the soil and a lover of his cattle. He differs both in

play in the village streets or on grazing grounds while tending cattle. Young men are fond of wrestling and gymnastics. Most of the villages have common gymnasiums and the youths go and practise there for an hour or two in the evening. Men past middle age take no active part in any game but are fond of witnessing wrestling matches. The farmer's amusements are equally simple and are largely connected with his bullocks. He has some special holidays in the year when he decorates his bullocks and takes them out in procession through the village and holds competitive tests of their physical strength in drawing heavy loads. Religious and cattle fairs are very common after the harvesting season and the farmer takes great pleasure in visiting them with his family. Wrestling matches are invariably arranged at these fairs and attract large crowds of Lingayat cultivators. The farmer does three things at these fairs. He worships his god, buys his requirements and enjoys shows like wrestling matches, the singing of country ballads and the performance of village dramas. Another occasion of great interest to him is the visit of his *swami* or religious *guru* for whom his enthusiasm is unbounded.

The Lingayat farmer has no real vices. His only habits are smoking tobacco in green leaves and chewing it with *pan*. Tea drinking is a recent introduction and is slowly increasing in the villages. The farmer has, however, many drawbacks. He spends much on marriage ceremonies and very often runs into debt. He is illiterate and has caste prejudices. He has no liking for any other occupation. His religion does not allow him to take to poultry and sheep-breeding. He does not even touch eggs and washes his hands if he does so. His wife interests herself in dairying and earns some money by selling butter. For repairs to his implements, he depends on the village



A Lingayat cultivator

[PLATE 5

A young Maratha cultivator

An old Maratha cutivator

carpenter and blacksmith. He has little business sense and it is his wife who does the weekly shopping. She buys even his *pan* and tobacco. He is easily excited when differences arise regarding his honour or his land, and he is a hard litigant in such matters. Such disputes may easily lead to his financial ruin or physical injury. His knowledge does not extend beyond his daily routine.

The Karnatak cultivator grows mostly dry crops. By age-long experience he knows when, how, and what to do. He is diligent and hard-working but not progressive. In most cases he owns a small piece of land and takes on lease other portions to make a good unit for a pair of bullocks. Farming being his only profession, he competes for the possession of land and often pays heavy rents. Depending upon rainfall as he does, he suffers in bad years and gets into debt. Heavy expenditure on marriages and litigation causes additional debts and interest charges to accumulate. He is very fond of his land and does not like to part with even a portion to clear off his debts. He thus allows the interest to accumulate until the whole of his land is at stake. He knows the art of farming but gambles when taking land on lease. The great depression during the last few years put a check to this type of gambling and he is now attempting to cultivate others' land mostly on the share system. He is by nature an honest and industrious worker and, if wisely helped and guided, should have a better future. A few farmers are met with here and there who have not only not incurred any debt but on the contrary have improved their position. These are mostly men who have not tried to gamble and who have taken to the improvements introduced by the Agricultural Department.

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3. The Maratha Cultivator*

By W. Burns

THE older (and still often used) English spelling is Mahratta. In this form the word itself has a fierce kind of look which is in no way belied by history. The Mahratta Ditch at Calcutta, the numerous states resulting from the break-up of the Maratha empire and the hill forts in the Deccan and Konkan, perched like eagles' eyries on inaccessible cliffs, all bear witness to a past which has still a strong influence on the peasantry. One of my greatest friends (now, alas, dead) was a sugarcane cultivator near Poona, humorous, hard-headed and pugnacious. I remember well his showing me some of the cuts in the old Maratha swordsmanship (*shir*, *chir* and *ashtang*, i.e. at the head, the neck and the chest). He had also been a great wrestler in his youth. Even today wrestling is by far the most popular of village sports and is as widespread as boxing in England. Of this man also I recollect that he wanted to make an embankment to block a *nulla* that was eroding his land. For this purpose he wished to use a big boulder of trap rock nearby. The Deccan abounds in these boulders and some of them, like this one, have on them a smear of vermilion, indicating that at some time they have been regarded as the dwelling of some local deity. His labourers were not too keen to remove this, perhaps sanctified, rock, but he persuaded them to do so and they trundled it off to the *nulla* (*ultun-pultun*, *ultun-pultun*, i.e. rolling it over and over). Suddenly one of the more superstitious labourers got a fright and shrieked that the offended deity was coming

* I am deeply indebted to Dr T. G. Shirname, now Chief Marketing Officer, Bombay, for much help in preparing this article. I also thank Dr M. B. Ghatge, Professor of Agricultural Economics, Poona, for useful data. [W. B.]

after them. The cultivator stopped, blew noisily on his fingers and said cheerily: 'Pouf! She's gone!' After this the boulder was well and truly built into the *bund* with no further alarms.

This tough and cheery type is the typical Maratha, and since I have mentioned their pugnacity and hard-headedness, I might mention something about their humour. The humour of a people is often shown in its proverbs. Most nations have some proverb or other dealing with the impossibility of improving or changing certain things. A Marathi saying of this kind is:

Kadu kāralé
Sākhret golalé
Tupat tolalé
Tari kadu té kaduz.

This refers to the exceeding bitterness of a well-known little cucumber and may be translated:

'Though you roll it in sugar and fry it in ghee, still it's as bitter as bitter can be.' Another Marathi proverb dealing with the same subject says: 'Though you put a dog's tail in a pipe for years, yet it will still have a kink in it.' Another example: a lady missionary friend of mine was driving a Ford car during the rains in one of the Marathi-speaking districts of the Bombay Province. In the words of a well-known Scottish students' song, 'She came to a river and she couldn't get across', but a dozen or so willing men from the nearby village came and shoved and pushed the car through the muddy water. As they pushed, they sang, and the lady, being much of their own mind and spirit, sang also. They said: 'This is fun', and when they reached the other bank they did not allow her to land but pushed the car back again to the bank they had left and once more over to the further bank, so prolonging the delight of the concert!

The Maratha is a great singer. At sowing time and harvest there is that kindly cooperation among neighbours that is found in many peasant countries. It is called *irjik* in Marathi. The owner of the field which is being sown or reaped by the help of his friends gives them a feed at night and may even provide a goat for the purpose. As the folk work they sing such 'chanties' as

Shābās ré wāghā
Bhālaré dadā

(meaning 'Well done, tiger, well done, brother').

Again, when in the making of *gul* (*gur*, jaggery) the pan is lifted off the fire to be poured there is sung a four-line religious 'chanty' that ends in the great shout of '*Satya-nārāyan māhārāj ki jai!*' as the big pan is tipped over.

With all these characteristics it is not to be wondered at that during the Great War the Maratha battalions, concerning whose military qualities not much was known, should have proved themselves not only valiant, but steady, tenacious, and able to crack a joke in a tight place. As troops, they still sing, and a Maratha unit on a route march has no difficulty in providing vocal music when the band stops.

It is not only history that affects human qualities but also geography, and the rather difficult nature of the Maratha country has contributed something to the spiritual and physical make-up of the peasant. The middle part of the Bombay Province is called the Maharashtra and comprises the districts of Poona, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Satara, Sholapur, Thana, Kolaba, Ratnagiri and East and West Khandesh. The so-called Southern Maratha Country comprises the districts of Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and North Kanara. In both areas there are many Indian states of Maratha origin, the most important being Kolhapur. There is a strong Gujarati element in

the two Khandesh districts, particularly in West Khandesh. The districts in the Southern Maratha Country are largely Kanarese, except a part of Belgaum district. It is in the centre that the most typical Maratha persons and cultivation are found. In this area, laced north and south and east and west by the main line and spurs of the Western Ghats, the Maratha cultivator carries on his agriculture on land of varying quality and in a rainfall that is often precarious. The rain may, however, come in tremendous bursts and this has caused much erosion and shifting of soil. Some of the Deccan hills are so bare of soil that they look as if they belonged to some fantastic lunar landscape. Near the foot of these hills the soil is light and poor, but further away and especially in the bottom of valleys there is rich deep land. In addition there occur pockets of good soil in unlikely places. Generally speaking the soil is not deep. It overlies the Deccan trap, and between the thin top soil and the hard rock is a layer of *murum* (disintegrated trap) which means good drainage as a rule, and in some cases leaching. About 80 per cent of the land is held by cultivators themselves direct from Government. Holdings are not large. In the Konkan (the coastal strip) they are from five to fifteen acres, in the west Maharashtra from fifteen to twenty-five acres, and may be from twenty-five to thirty acres in the east. A holding is not a single, compact block but is generally made up of scattered plots, and the distance between these plots may be anything from a few yards to a few miles. This is one of the causes for the cultivator not living on his holding, while another is a certain fear of wandering criminal tribes. Where there are facilities for water and holdings are compact, farmers do live on their holdings, however, and in such cases cultivation is of a high standard.

The conformation of the Ghats has been used by the Irrigation Department to facilitate the construction of certain large reservoirs which are nothing more than deep river valleys blocked at their mouths. These give the water for the Deccan Canals systems and on that water the skilled Saswad malis made their name and their fortunes in the early days of sugarcane growing when *gur* prices were high. On this water also is now grown the cane of the Deccan sugar factories, and here are got as a matter of course yields of 30 and 40 tons cane per acre by ordinary peasants.

Fruit is also grown on this irrigation water, and in the Ahmednagar district are some excellent plantations of *santra* and *musumbi* oranges, while banana plantations are spreading. Irrigation, however, even *plus* watering from wells, influences only a very small fraction of the area and the dry crops are the most important. Among these *jowar*, *bajri* and rice are the leading ones among the food crops, and cotton, groundnut and safflower among the commercial crops. Roughly rice and *bajri* occupy two parallel north-to-south bands on the map, the dividing line being the Western Ghats. *Jowar* is spread over several of the above-Ghat districts. The two Khandesh districts grow Oomras cotton, and there also is centred the groundnut cultivation. A range of pulses is also grown, mostly mixed with cereal crops.

It is very noticeable that on comparatively poor land which grows *bajri* in the rains the Maratha peasant finds it worth while to use the iron plough, and probably in no area are so many iron ploughs in use as in the Maharashtra. For his bullocks the Maratha cultivator has genuine sympathy and affection. He sings to them while at work on the plough or the well, he has pet names for each of them, and after work, when they have drunk,

he carefully washes their faces and eyes. He is careful about pairing them for the yoke, and has the greatest exaltation when his animals win a prize in a cattle show. Once a year, at the feast of Pola, the bullocks are worshipped, decorated, taken in procession, and fed sumptuously.

The Maratha cultivator's everyday dress consists of a *dhoti*, a shirt, a turban, a pair of sandals and a rough blanket. This last-named garment is carried about only in cold or rainy weather. To cover himself when sleeping he has a sort of quilt made of old rags by his womenfolk at home. This is called a *wakal* or *godhadi*. During warm days in summer he takes over his shoulder his spare *dhoti*, and in the evening, before returning home, he bathes himself and washes his soiled *dhoti* in some stream or well, putting on the clean dry one to go home. On ceremonial occasions he carries, like a plaid, a few yards of bordered or plain linen.

The cultivator generally lives in a village. The village is usually situated on high-lying ground where the soil is poor and light in colour. Hence the village site is called *pandhari* (white) and the outlying cultivated lands *kali* (black). Several villages have still got the old protective mud walls, occasionally loopholed. The accommodation the cultivator provides for himself and his family depends on his prosperity. A house with three rooms and a verandah is not uncommon. The verandah is used for the bullocks and a few milch cattle. Sometimes there is an independent shed for the cattle. More prosperous cultivators may have a *wada*, a two-storey house with a quadrangle of subsidiary rooms behind it. At the busy times of the year the cultivator is afoot for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four but at other times he has little to do, and from many districts men go to the Bombay

factories. Before motor transport became so widespread, they used also to do a lot of carting in the off-season.

The cultivator's food is simple but good. In *jowar*- and *bajri*-growing districts *bhakris* (unleavened pancakes of the whole-meal of these grains) are the staple food. In rice-growing districts, rice forms the principal item of diet. A pungent curry prepared from pulse and onion is taken in all tracts. Wheat, *gur*, and milk are used only on ceremonial occasions and festivals. The cultivator is not a vegetarian but does not get the chance to eat mutton more than eight or ten times a year. His meals are taken about 9 A.M., about 1 P.M. and the last one at night along with his family. The cultivator knows what belt-tightening means, and the time of shortness of provisions in July and August gets the special name of *akhadi*. *Akhadi* therefore has the connotation of scarcity. The Maratha cultivator is very hospitable and provides hot milk and very often tea for the visitor.

The marriage season starts in November when the *kharif* crops have been harvested and there is some money available. The marriage season, however, is at its peak in March and April after all the crops are harvested and this is also the time for village festivals and fairs.

The Maratha is not only tough and humorous but there is also a strong strain of religion in him, for his spiritual ancestry comprises not only warriors like Shivaji but saints like Dnyanadev and Tukaram and these have left him a legacy of hymns and stories which form the subject of night-long séances in the local temple, where, sitting on the floor, he joins in the chants with voice and cymbals. Hence also the pilgrimages which he and his womenfolk undertake, mainly to Alandi and Pandharpur, carrying with them the split red pennon that marks the spiritual traveller.

May they not only travel hopefully but also arrive in peace.

4. The Kathiawar Cultivator

By D. G. Kelkar

KATHIAWAR is the peninsular or western portion of Gujarat, in the province of Bombay. Its extreme length is 220 miles and its greatest breadth 165 miles, the area being 23,445 square miles, with a population of nearly 3,000,000. Of the total area and population, about 20,882 square miles, with a population of nearly 2,500,000, is the territory belonging to 200 or more separate states. There are the bigger states of Jamnagar, Junagadh, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Porbunder and Morvi, with areas ranging from a few hundred square miles to nearly 4,000 square miles.

The peninsula can be divided roughly into 12 main sections, viz. (1) Kathiawar, (2) Gohilwad, (3) Zalawad, (4) Halar, (5) Sorath, (6) Panchal, (7) Okho Bardo, (8) Valank, (9) Gir, (10) Vagher, (11) Babaria, and (12) Bhal.

Agriculture is the dominant occupation of the population, who belong to the Kanbi, Kathi, Koli, Karadia, Rajput, Ahir, Babaria, Rabari, Mussulman. and Vagher classes.

The Kanbis, with a population of nearly 800,000 to 1,000,000, form the major class of agriculturists called *kheduts*. The chief sub-classes among the Kanbis are (a) Halaria Leuva, (b) Kadva Kanbi, (c) Gohelwadi, (d) Gujarati, (e) Nadoda, and (f) Tarkhada, of which the first three are in the majority

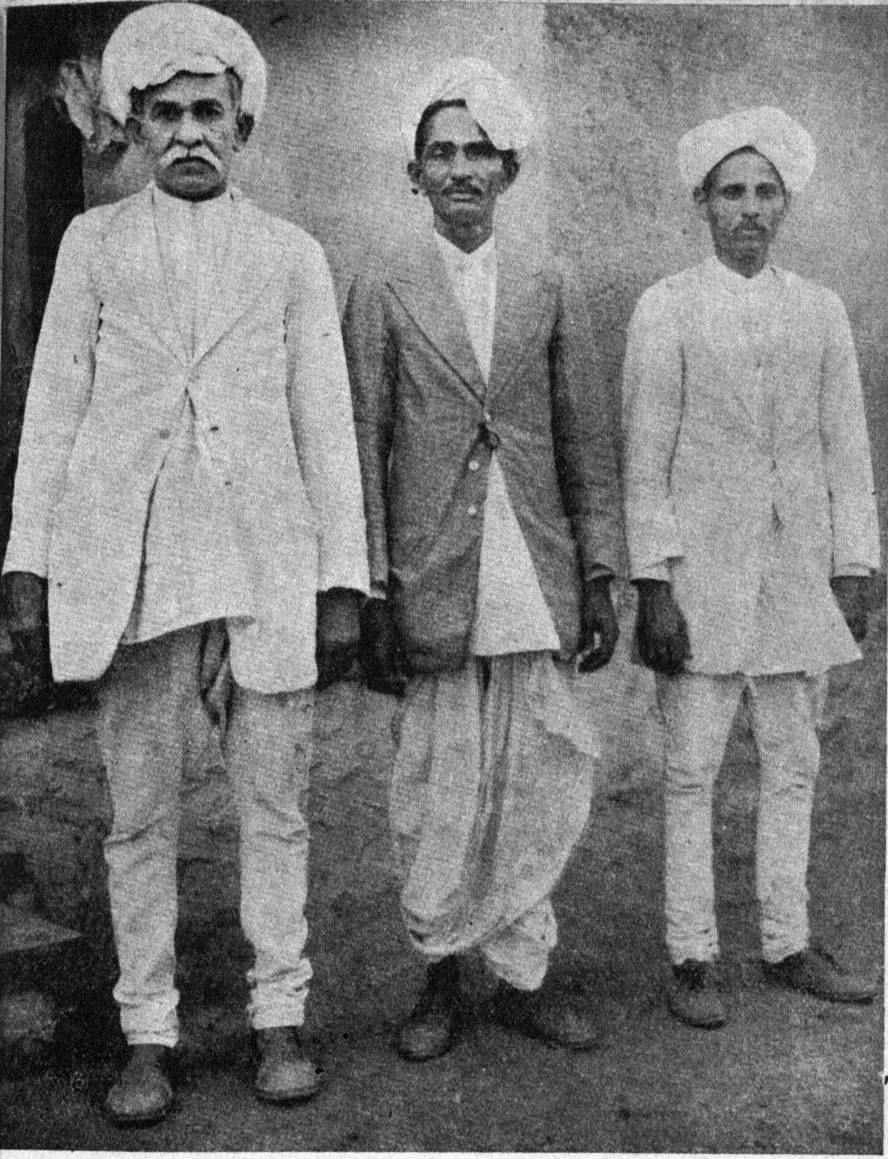
The soil is chiefly medium black, 6 in. to 2 ft. deep. One can find in some places patches of and best suited for garden crops. There are also lands which are called

kharapat lands, i.e. brackish. These lands are better in quality, in depth and in texture. But the well water in these lands is not suitable for irrigation.

Bajri, cotton, *jowar*, and groundnut are the staple crops of the peninsula. *Til*, castor, wheat, sugarcane, and lucerne are also taken according to the suitability of the soil and water facilities. Pulses like *mung*, *urid*, *kulthi*, and gram are grown only on a small scale.

Home Life

The villages in Kathiawar are not big villages as in other parts of the country. A Kathiawar village is composed of 75 to 400 houses with a total population of 300 to 2,000 souls. Villages with a population of 2,000 are few. The houses, adjoining one another, are grouped according to caste. The untouchables, the Bharvads, and the Kolis have their own grouping. Walking through a village, one sees a long line of wall on both sides. These lines are the outside walls of a series of houses having their doors on the other side. A house consists of a *dehali* or *dehalo*, which is the entrance sufficiently big to allow the passage of cattle, carts, and implements. On entering this *dehalo*, one comes to verandahs on both sides which are used as sitting rooms by the male members of the family and guests. Then there is open ground. There will be a couple of rooms or more forming the kitchen and living rooms. There will also be a cattle shed. Inside such a house the Kathiawar cultivator passes his life. The shape, size, plan and construction of his house varies according to his economic condition. It is generally constructed of mud or mud bricks. Well-to-do cultivators use *pucca* bricks. Windows, ventilators, etc. are few. The utensils are made of earth, copper or brass. There



A trio of well-to-do Kathiawar *kheduts*

PLATE 7

Kathiawar Housewives carrying the midday meal to the *wadi* or field. The pots contain buttermilk.

[PLATE 8

are a couple of big wooden boxes, kerosene tins, *matlas* (earthen pots) and big earthen storage vessels called *kothies* to store grain. Sometimes one finds a long wooden plank or shelf, on which dozens of brass dishes, tumblers, *lotas*, and other vessels are arranged. This is to be seen in a well-to-do cultivator's house. The arrangements in a Kathi class house are more marked. The women, as they observe strict *purdah*, have separate apartments for themselves. The decoration is more artistic in a Kathi house. Cushions, pillows, and embroidery are to be found for use and decoration.

The Day's Work

The Kathiawar *khedut* and his wife rise early in the morning and start their respective work for the day. The *khedut* takes his tools, bullocks, etc. and goes to the *wadi* or field, while his wife milks the cows and buffaloes, churns the butter, cleans the house and cattle shed. She then prepares the midday meal and takes it to the field where she helps her husband in his work.

The *khedut's* wife, daughters, and daughters-in-law work in the fields with him. They help him in cutting the fodder, harvesting the crop, feeding and milking the cattle, carrying his dinner to the field, churning the butter, etc. They are as busy the whole day as the *khedut* himself.

Whatever his caste or sub-caste, the *khedut* is a well-built, fairly tall man of good physique. He stands 5 ft. 6 in. to 6 ft. There are several instances of men and women who have lived and enjoyed good health up to the age of 90 or 95 years. He has a 'wheat-coloured' skin and prominent features. The women, though of medium height, are well-built. The Kathi class of

men and women are known for their beauty, height, and prominence of features.

The *khedut* has three meals a day. Breakfast, which he calls *shiraman*, consists of *bajri* or *jowar* bread (*rotalo*), curds or buttermilk, *gur*, ghee, pickles, etc. This *shiraman* he takes early, before he starts his day's work.

The midday meal, which is usually taken in the field under a tree, consists of *jowar*, *bajri* or wheat bread, *dal*, vegetables, pickles, chillies and buttermilk.

The night meal is made up of *khichadi* (boiled rice and *dal*), curry, vegetables, bread (*bajra*, *jowar* or wheat), chillies, pickles and milk or buttermilk.

On festival days, sweets called *kansar* or *ladwa* made of ground wheat, ghee, sugar or *gur*, rice, *dal*, vegetables, pickles, *papad*, etc. constitute his fare. *Shiro*, another preparation of wheat, is also included as a sweet.

Costume of the People

Clothes differ slightly in parts of Kathiawar and among different classes of *kheduts*. Thick hand-woven material is used by the *khedut* and his family.

A *survar* or *cholna*, a type of breeches tight below the knee and broad at the hips and waist, a *kadiu* or shirt with long sleeves but short at the waist with string or tape instead or buttons, and a turban tied in the fashion typical of Kathiawar, form his dress. He puts on thick, heavy, fairly high-heeled, broad-toed shoes called *pagrakha*—foot protector. Instead of a turban he sometimes wears a smaller piece of cloth called *faliu* as his head-dress.

This dress is sometimes decorated with different coloured ribbons, particularly for ceremonial occasions.

It is not unusual to see a thick pointed needle and small pincers fastened to the string of the shirt. They help to remove thorns which may prick his feet while at work.

The costume varies with different castes and districts, but not greatly. A Halaria *khedut* will have a red turban with white spots, the Kathi will have a long *feta* of fine coloured cloth, while a Vagher will simply tie a piece of spotted coloured cloth on his head with a knot, leaving two ends free. The children will have the same costume, more decorative when worn on festival days.

Shirts, *dhoties*, *survars*, coats, caps, *champals* and fine shoes are nowadays worn by sons of well-to-do *kheduts*.

The women have a thick skirt called *ghaghara*, an open-back blouse or *choli* and a thin piece of cloth called *sadla* for covering the head and body. All these clothes are brightly coloured. Deep red, black, deep yellow, deep yellow with black spots, blue, purple, and crimson are some of the popular colours. The *ghagharas* are of bright colour, with a broad border of another colour. The blouses are of coloured pieces of cloth. They wear gold, silver, and sometimes ornaments of other metals, usually thick anklets or *kadlas*, bangles, earrings, and necklaces. The women also put on thick, broad-toed, low-heeled shoes. The womenfolk of well-to-do *kheduts*, who have not much to do in the fields, put on fairly smooth, soft, fine, fashionable clothes, delicate ornaments, and *champals*. The girls put on a *ghaghara* or *parkar* and a polka or blouse.

Before their marriage, the girls do a lot of sewing, knitting and embroidery and work in glass beads in preparation of their trousseaux. The *torans* and *chaklas* (embroidery) and horse and bullock decorations of

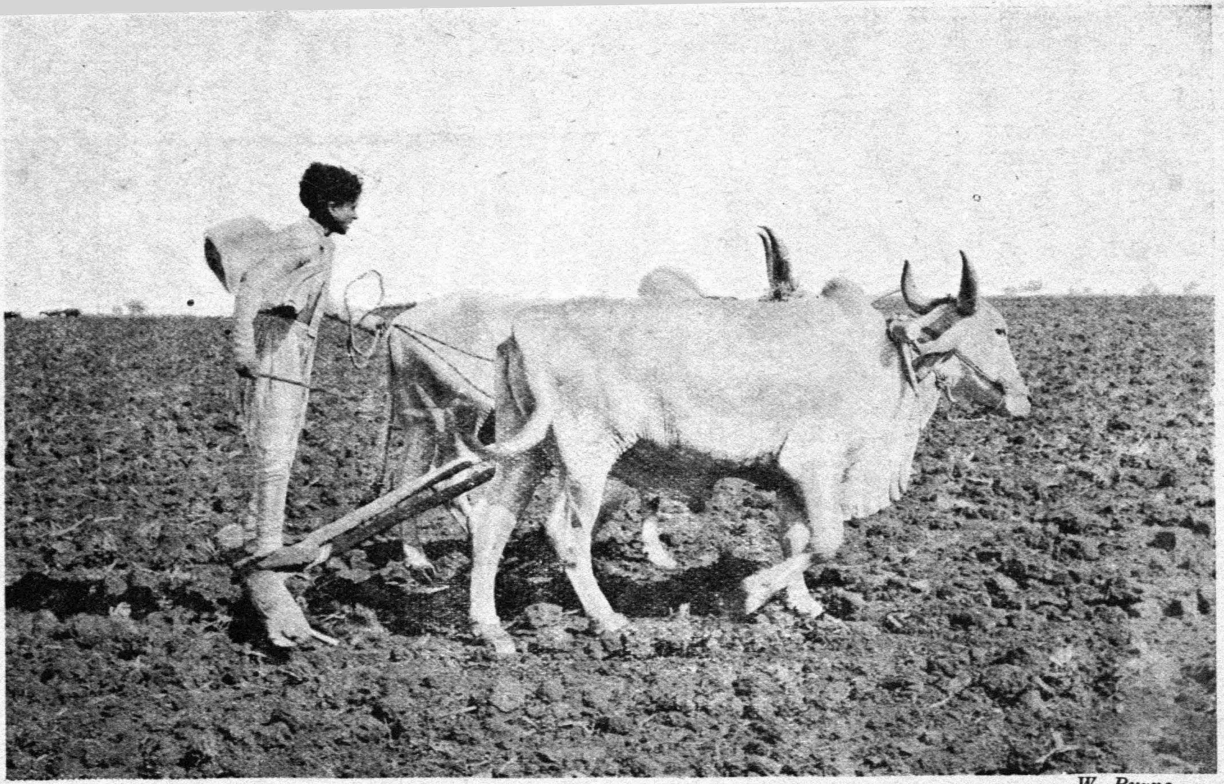
cloth, glass beads and small round mirrors of Kathiawar are famous. They are made by the girls, along with their clothes and marriage ornaments, and are taken by them to the bridegroom's house in a big decorated wooden box called *patara* presented to the girl by her father at the time of her marriage or after she gets the first child.

Simple Habits

The *khedut* is a hard worker, but not an intelligent worker. If he has a well, with sufficient water and suitable soil, he knows how to grow wheat, sugarcane, vegetables and lucerne successfully. Lucerne cultivation in Kathiawar has a history of more than half a century behind it. A good deal of lucerne seed is annually exported from Kathiawar to other parts of the country. Fruit-growing, as found in certain tracts, is a more recent development.

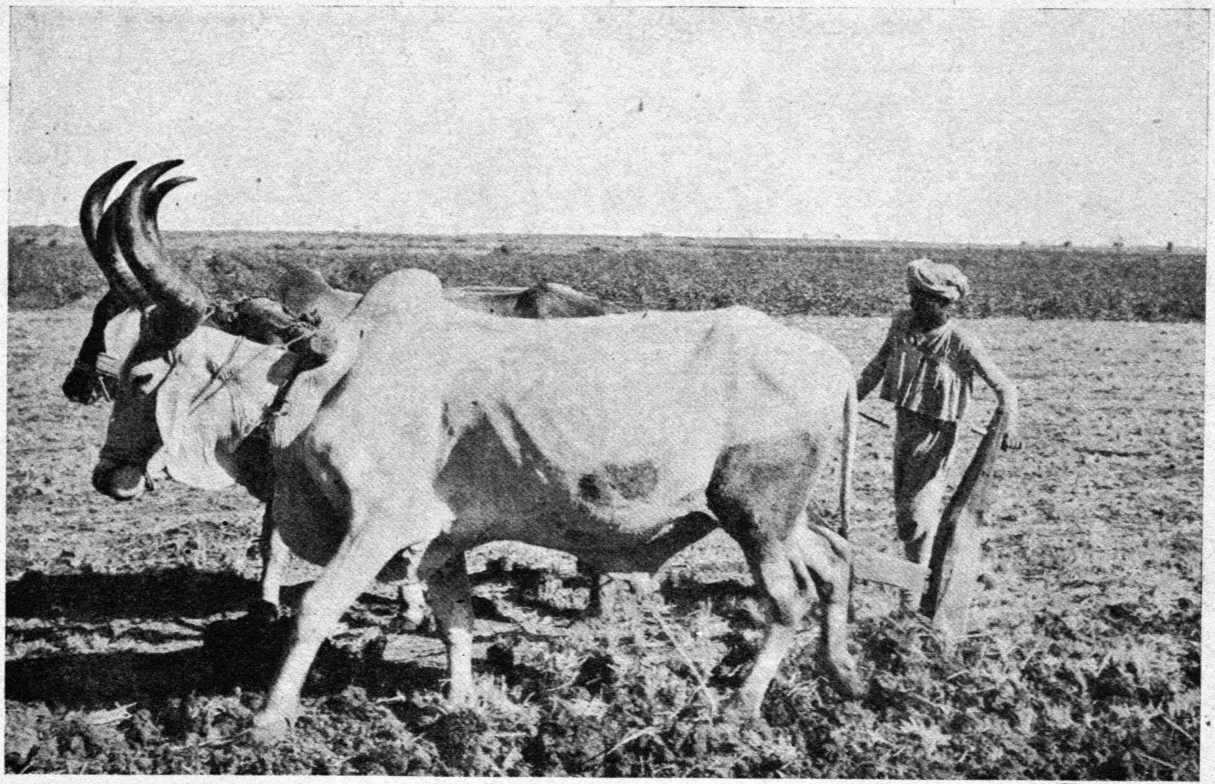
The *khedut* is simple in his habits. He is fond of his *sudi* and *sopari*—nutcracker and betel nut. He smokes, but not to the extent found in the tobacco-growing tracts of western India. The *hookah* is common only among the Kathi, Karadia, and Vagher classes. In general, he rarely touches liquor and is strictly a vegetarian. But Kathis, Karadias, and Vaghers are not so. They are not only non-vegetarian but drink fairly heavily. Kathis and some old folk of the Kanbi class are addicted to opium-eating.

While he is simple in his habits, he is not particularly frank. Although found to be selfish in certain respects, he is very hospitable and sweet-tongued. Hospitality in Kathiawar is well known. Like cultivators of other parts of the province, he is very conservative and sticks to his own old ideas. But when once convinced



W. Burns

Junagadh State, *en route* to Makkala village—Harrowing



W. Burns

Junagadh State, Manekwada village—Ploughing up stubble

[PLATE 10

of the advantage of a particular seed, method or implement, he takes to it. The tendency to follow an example is marked. A new idea spreads among other cultivators in a manner well-expressed by a local saying *Gadhario pravah*, i.e. like the flow of a flock of sheep; if one sheep goes in a particular direction all the sheep go after it. He is prone to litigation. The family is generally a divided family, the father staying with his youngest son. The lands are divided and sub-divided into small fragments.

As for games, there is none which an adult *khedut* plays. The boys play the usual games of the village, namely *gedi dada*, a cloth ball, and stick; and *under-kedi*—'the footpath of a rat'— a game played by two teams of 11 persons each. This game resembles *atya patya* on the Deccan side.

Dandiya ras and *garbi bhawaias* and folksongs are his main items of recreation. He has *bhajan* also, at the time of festivals, particularly during the *Navaratra* and *Dussera* holidays. The girls and women also sing. The main festival days are: (1) *Norta* and *Dussera* (October), (2) *Hutashani* (February-March), (3) *Ganesh choth* (August-September), (4) *Janmashthami* (July-August), and (5) *Bhim agyaras* (May-June). On these days, the men and women, boys and girls, put on their best attire, make merry, eat sweets, play *dandiya ras*, *garbi*, and sing folksongs and *bhajans*. Gambling is also one of the items of recreation, particularly on *Bhim 'agyaras* day.

Marriages take place during February and March. There are sometimes several hundred marriages on a single day in the Peninsula. In a big village, it is not a surprising sight to witness 15 to 30 marriages on the same day. The bridegroom's party consisting of 10,

20, 30 or 40 men, women and children, comes to the bride's village in carts, with bullocks well decorated, horses, camels, etc. Nowadays they frequently go by train or bus. The party arrives on the morning of the marriage day and returns on the next. The members of either sex are in their best clothes. Girls and women sing the whole day, on their way in the train, bus or bullock cart to the bride's village for the marriage and when they return with the bride to their own village. They sing in a high pitch, until their voices fail. Religious ceremonies in a *khedut's* marriage there are none. The Preceptor, after a short recital of hymns, reads a message written on a paper, namely a proclamation that 'the son, by name, of such and such a person of such and such a village is today married to the daughter, by name, of such and such a person of such and such a village.' Thus is sealed the marriage of a *khedut* of Kathiawar.

III

THE BENGAL CULTIVATOR

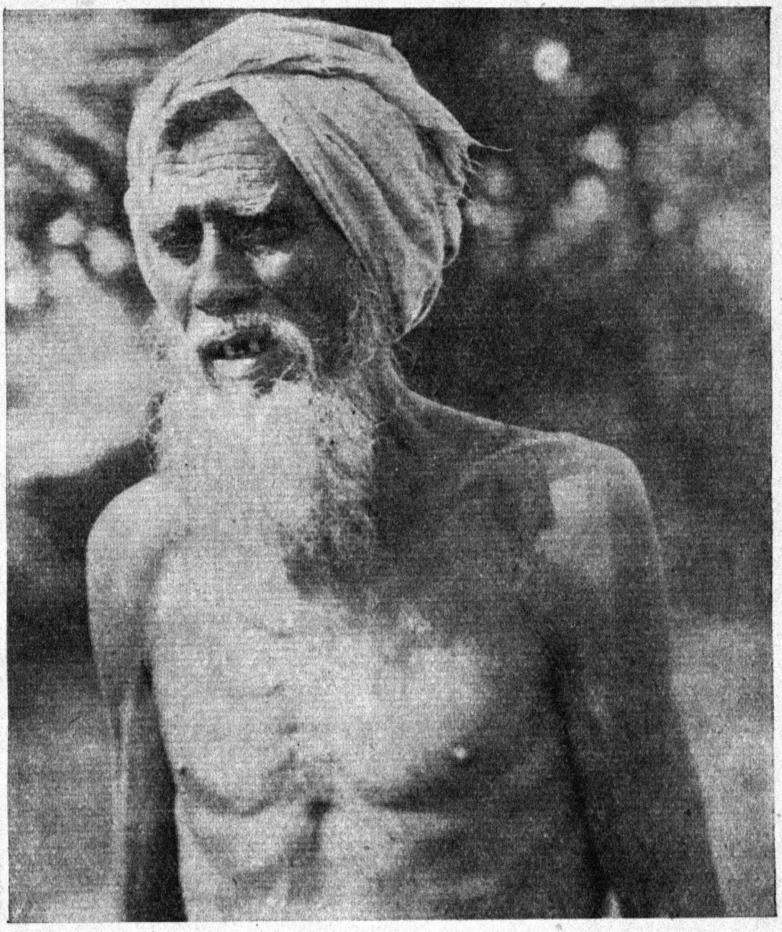
By K. McLean

IT is commonly supposed that the Bengal cultivator lives a life of idleness for six months or more in the year. This may be so where the land is single-cropped, but a large area in Bengal is cropped twice or even three times in the year. In eastern Bengal particularly, where the average holding is less than two acres, the cultivator must lead a strenuous life to gain sufficient from the land to maintain his family. In western Bengal there are large holdings on which transplanted *aman* (late or winter) paddy is the only crop. The owners are seldom cultivators; they employ labourers who are usually paid in kind. The same applies in the single-cropped *aman* paddy land in the Sunderbans. In the Bhil tracts, a series of depressions which are flooded except for some three months in the year, the cultivator has a strenuous period in the dry season, harvesting his deep-water *aman* paddy and preparing the land rapidly for the next crop so as to get it sufficiently advanced to stand up to the flood water when it comes. For the remaining nine months of the year he is not idle. as fishing occupies his time, and he usually has a small area of land round the homestead where he grows vegetables and condiments.

Where the land is cropped twice or three times, the cultivator has little leisure. Ploughings for the *aus* (early or autumn paddy) crop commence in February or March as soon as the *rabi* crop is off the ground. The land is ploughed five or six times and the clods broken down by the 'ladder'—the Bengal equivalent of the

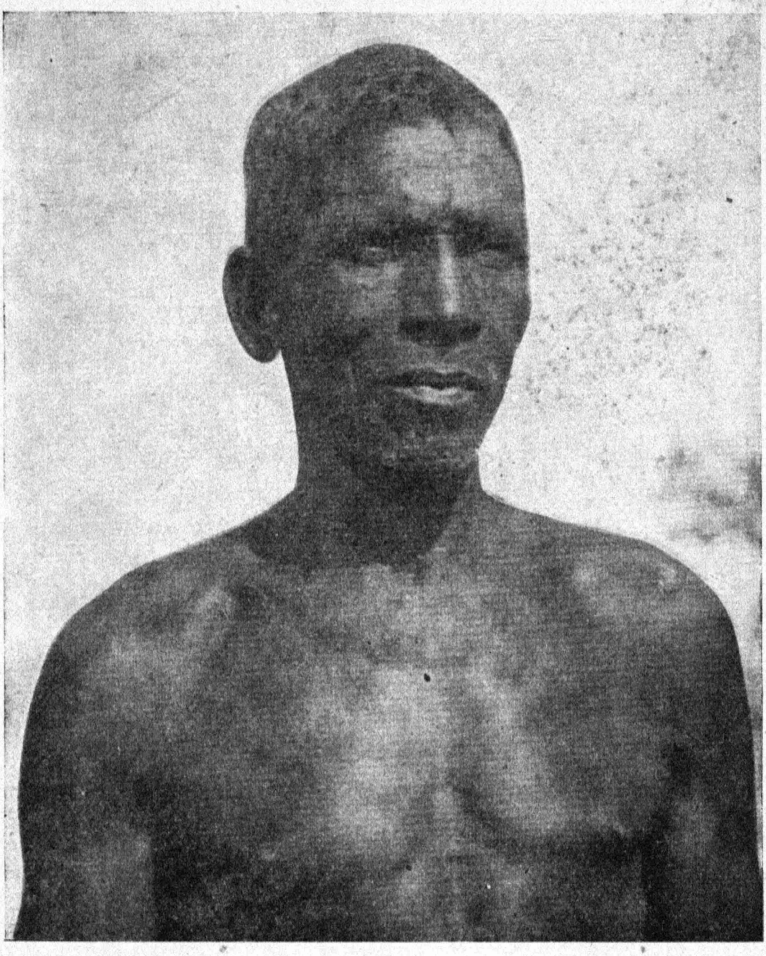
hanga or beam, or by hand with a mallet. The crop, jute or *aus* paddy, is sown after the first suitable showers. After germination a bamboo rake may be run through the crop to loosen the soil and thin out the stand; but usually mulching, weeding and thinning is done by hand with a *khurpi*. *Aus* paddy is generally weeded twice, but jute receives two weedings and three thinnings. The last thinning is done when the plants are five to six feet high, and the plants thinned out are steeped and retted for fibre. August is the busy month of harvesting, and as it is a particularly wet month, the conditions are very trying. The paddy is cut and carried to the homestead, where it is threshed by bullocks and advantage has to be taken of the short periods of sunshine in drying the grain. This in itself is laborious as the grain has to be taken to shelter in the event of rain and exposed again when the sun shines. Jute matures at the same time as *aus* paddy. It is cut close to the ground with a sickle, left in bundles for a short time for the leaves to shed, and then carried to the retting pool. The cultivator, standing in water up to his waist, lays the bundles in series and one above the other until the heap reaches water level, when weights are placed on the top to keep it submerged. Retting is completed in about twenty days and, from the sixteenth day onwards, the heap is examined to see how far retting has advanced. Stripping off the fibre and washing means many days' labour in waist-deep water. Drying the fibre on bamboo supports is less arduous, but requires careful watching and manipulation of the fibre to ensure that the drying is even throughout.

Having harvested his *aus* paddy, which he usually uses for family consumption, and his jute which he sells, the cultivator turns to his *aman* paddy transplantation. Whilst jute and *aus* paddy are reaching maturity, he



A typical Mussulman cultivator of Bengal

[PLATE 11



A typical Hindu cutivator of Bengal

[PLATE 12

has prepared his *aman* paddy seed-beds; and, as soon as the crops are off the land, the seedlings are ready for transplanting. Puddling and transplanting in knee-deep mud occupies the cultivator for several days, and tired men and bullocks are glad to see the work completed. If the rainfall is sufficient, weeding is unnecessary, but there are many years in which weeds have to be removed. Having finished transplanting, the cultivator has time to think of marketing his jute. He carries it to market in his boat if communications are convenient, or on his head across the country if they are not. For a month or so work eases off. In November comes the *aman* paddy harvest, which is less exacting than the *aus* paddy harvest as the weather is generally fine. The land has now to be rapidly prepared for *rabi* sowings before moisture is lost. Mustard, pulses and occasionally barley or wheat are the usual *rabi* crops grown. These require a certain amount of weeding and mulching whilst they are on the ground; and immediately they are harvested the cultivator starts the yearly round again, preparing the land for his *aus* crop. Where the land is cropped three times *rabi* cultivation is not intensive; where it is double-cropped potatoes, chillies, tobacco, etc. are grown intensively, and watered by hand.

The cultivator has a long day. Apart from work in the fields, he has to see to the feed of his cattle and repairs to his houses, etc.; and who can blame him if one day in the week he repairs to the local market in the afternoon, whether he has a purchase or sale to make or not? He smokes some extra pipes and hears the news of the outside world. Dawn finds the cultivator up and about on the way to the field. His breakfast, consisting of reheated boiled rice, is brought to him in the field and he carries on till midday when he returns to the homestead

for the big meal of the day. This consists of rice and curry which may be made of vegetables only or include fish according to the season. A *dal-puree* usually accompanies the curry. An hour's siesta settles down the meal and the fields claim attention again up to twilight when he returns to the homestead. The cattle are fed and settled for the night, and a wash and a smoke precede the evening meal which again consists of rice and curry. The cultivator is a good trencherman and a consumption by an adult of 2 lb. of rice a day is not exceptional. Nine o'clock finds the household abed and asleep.

The accommodation the cultivator provides for his family depends on his prosperity. Unlike Upper India, there is no clustering of houses in villages except in parts of west Bengal and in the Bhil areas, where the homesteads are perched in a long line on artificially raised embankments. Elsewhere the cultivator lives in the midst of his land as the crofter does in Scotland. Religion and tradition demand several residential houses. There is the *baithakhana* where guests are received, the main dwelling house occupied by parents and young children, two or more sleeping houses for adult members of the family, a kitchen house and a cattle-shed. In eastern Bengal the houses are erected on a mud plinth, wooden posts supporting a corrugated iron roof while the walls are made of matting. Owing to the pressure on the land, the corrugated iron roof has supplanted thatch. In western Bengal, mud walls are common and are surmounted by a thatched or a *kutcha* tiled roof. The Bengal cultivator does not appreciate western furniture: he requires neither tables nor chairs. He may have a wooden *chowki* raised above the damp floor to sleep on, and may indulge in a mosquito net, but such sybarites are few. His furniture consists of necessities in the shape of cooking

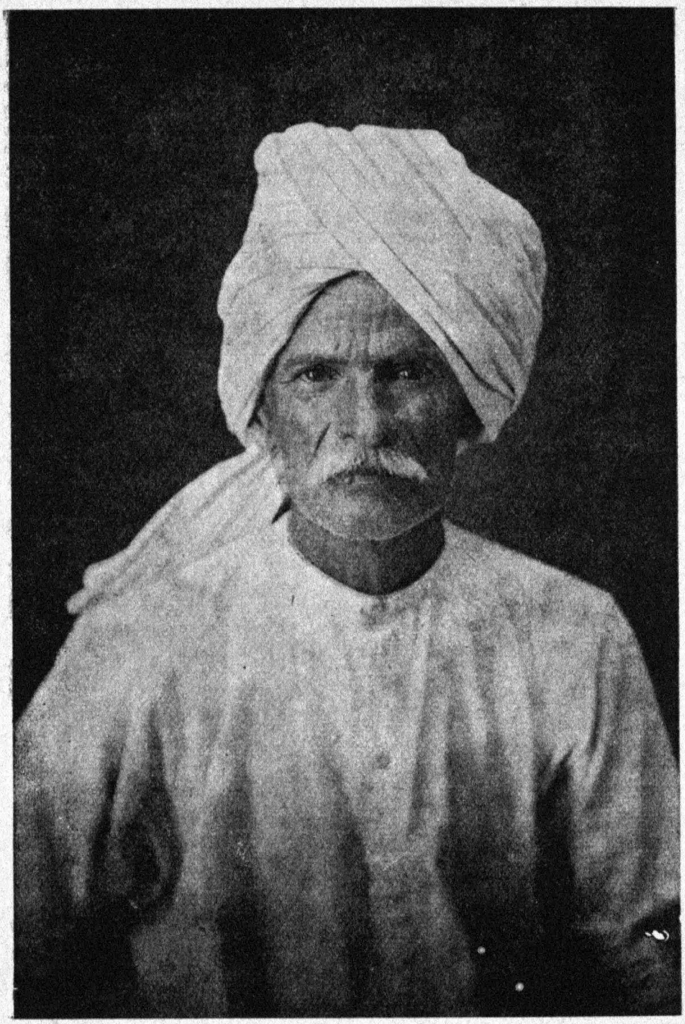
utensils and storage vessels for grain and household supplies. A stout box preserves the gala-day clothes which are produced at the *Id* or Hindu festival according to his religion. His working dress is limited and inexpensive—a *lungi* or loin cloth and a yard of calico which serves as a head protector when the sun is hot, a towel to mop his brow, and a receptacle for market produce as occasion demands. He has little time for amusements, but is an enthusiastic fisherman. His methods might not appeal to Isaak Waltons: all sorts of devices are brought into play—baited hooks, spears, nets and traps; but he is just as enthusiastic over the catch as any angler. Bands of strolling players visit the countryside occasionally and are welcomed and criticized, and compared with local talent. In some districts, Government cinema parties exhibit instructional films interspersed with films in lighter vein, and these have proved a great attraction. The magic lantern is no longer magic, and soon even the silent film will be scorned.

The cultivator in Bengal is not addicted to intoxicants. On special occasions coconut water is used as a sweet and harmless beverage, and tea is rapidly becoming popular. For a stimulant with more 'kick' in it he will now and then take *ganja*. Perhaps amongst stimulants of the pernicious kind may be classed litigation in which he is all too prone to indulge. The Mussulman when in funds likes to give himself and his folks a treat, buying *hilsa* fish or mangoes even if they are expensive.

The Bengali cultivator is an indulgent parent and although often illiterate himself makes it his first endeavour to send his son to school. Pressure of work on the holding may often interfere with regularity of attendance, thus breaking the continuity of the schooling. There is also the other danger—never absent from any

agricultural country—of the school-trained boy losing touch with the land.

Such in brief is the life of this hard-working and lovable cultivator.



A Jat of the United Provinces—a soldier cutivator

[PLATE 13

IV

THE UNITED PROVINCES CULTIVATOR

1. The Jat Cultivator

By Abdul Hamid Khan Sahabzada

THE Jat cultivators of the United Provinces are concentrated in the western districts but have now spread more or less throughout the province wherever conditions promise a livelihood from cultivation and cattle. With traditions deeply rooted in agriculture they are a sturdy and independent race, loyal alike to their land and to its service in arms. Wherever a Jat community is found, there one can look with certainty for a high standard of cultivation, a long-standing tradition of hospitality, an independent outlook, directness of speech, and loyalty to one's salt.

Let us look at a typical though perhaps prosperous above-average representative in the state tube-well area in Meerut district. As we are proceeding on our way, we notice excellent crops of sugarcane in solid blocks, with the tube-well building at the highest point in the area. Reaching our village, we observe that the Jat houses of brick, or with neat and well-built mud walls, are far superior in quality and maintenance to those of the general run of cultivators of the province and that the people are better dressed and appear both healthier and happier. On entering the village we are greeted and invited to sit and rest awhile on a strong, well-built *charpoy*. A peep into our host's courtyard shows the cattle and young stock being given their morning feed. The cows are of the Hissar type, giving a fair quantity of milk and there seems to be an abundance of green fodder. The care given to the cattle is obvious.

The head of our host's household is the old grandfather, hale and hearty, and a personality in the village panchayat. Retired from a famous Jat Regiment, he is full of stories of his adventures in the Great War in France and Mesopotamia. The care of zemindari and cultivation he has handed over to his elder son, our host himself contributing traditional counsel and shrewd though somewhat conservative comment. The younger son is with 'the Regiment' where his recent promotion has brought joy to the heart of the old warrior.

There are four grandchildren, two boys, of whom the eldest has already followed the family tradition of military service, and two girls shortly to be married. The father has already made arrangements for borrowing from the *bania* for the girls' marriage 'Everyone must spend to put up a good show when one marries one's daughter.' His savings were not enough, as he wanted to invest in improved agricultural implements which were so much the talk of the village. The Deputy Sahib had given their village a set of improved implements as aid to the *gramsudhar* (village uplift). Our host had tried these and found that they were effective 'if one followed the rules of good husbandry', and he must have his own set.

The youngest son attends the village school. On the subject of schooling the grandfather is somewhat scathing, telling his son that it is no use sending the boy to school. It will only lead to his running away to town and becoming a clerk! 'We are not that class: either we must till the soil or we must be soldiers.'

The Jats, as a race, are fine ploughmen with traditional knowledge of the art of tilling the soil at the proper time and of preparing a fine seed-bed. That our host is no exception is obvious from his land and the condition of his crops. These are his first interest and his main delight;

but when the work of the day is over he is happy to sit in the evening in his small *chaupal* (raised sitting-out platform) and to discuss the events of the day and village interests to the accompaniment of his *hookah*. The *chamars* of the village are at the moment somewhat of a problem. The introduction of tube-well irrigation, the block sowing of crops with realignment and straightening of field boundaries and the introduction of labour-saving devices have reduced the demands upon daily labour, thus creating a minor unemployment problem. Our host had suggested help provided they settled down to the cultivation of the land, but they prefer the freer if more precarious existence by daily labour and selling grass and fuel in the town.

That our host and his fellow Jats are alive to the possibilities of agricultural improvement is evident when we walk through the fields. He himself has 300 *bighas* (about 50 acres) of zemindari, of which he cultivates 200. Of this he has already remodelled 80 *bighas* along with his neighbours, under the advice of the Agricultural Development Officers. The fields have been reshaped with straight *mends* (field boundaries) and direct water channels, and the crops are sown in solid blocks with roadways running through them, made by the owners of the fields themselves. Once the advantage had been realized by the village, there was no objection to readjustment of field boundaries and a division of the irrigated area into blocks which followed the approved rotation. Thus without the difficulties of consolidation of holdings they had reaped most of its advantages. As he proudly explained, 'We are following the old system of *har kheti*', i.e. division of the area into solid blocks for *kharif*, *rabi* and *dofasli* with a little grazing and a small grove of mangoes, and they were quite happy with the result of their cooperative effort

Yields were increasing, irrigation had become easy and watching the crops a game. Irrigation from the tube-well had sent their cane shooting to the heavens.

He was rightly proud of his cane crop which we estimated at 800 maunds to the acre. This was nearly all destined for the sugar factory. Only one *kolhu* (bullock-power crusher) remained in the village for *gur* for local consumption. 'This year,' he said, 'we are taking all to the factory. We get only Rs. 2-4 for a maund of *gur* which hardly pays its way and *gur* is difficult to keep. Sold to the factory, we have no further worry with it. We have contracted for the whole lot through the Cooperative Inspector who has set up a centre in the village.'

Thus a Jat is not shy of using agencies which are to his advantage or of adopting unfamiliar methods when their value has been demonstrated. The cane had been sown in lines suitably earthed up and where necessary tied in stools to prevent lodging. Green manuring with *sanai* is becoming a general practice in the village and in our host's opinion was 'a great friend, particularly of the small cultivators, whose stock of dung manure is insufficient'.

A Jat finds plenty to keep him busy throughout the year in the fields with his crops and his livestock. The high spots of his life are occasional. A chorus at *Holi*, merry-making at *Dusehra*, an occasional visit to market, and domestic ceremonial occasions appear to afford all the variety he desires outside the care of his house, his cultivation and the affairs of the village. Let there, however, be word of a wrestling match, and whether he is of suitable age, or too young, or too old to participate, he will be there unless his major interests prevent him.

2. The Muslim Cultivator of Oudh

By C. Maya Das

ALTHOUGH practically 99 per cent of Muslim cultivators in Oudh belong to the Sunni sect, any Muslim, whether he is Shia or Sunni (Sheikh, Moghul or Pathan), may, without prejudice, adopt the profession of a cultivator. Most Sheikh and Pathan Muslims in the villages are engaged in side-industries such as oil-crushing, spinning, pottery and the rearing of goats and cattle chiefly for milk. This is done, however, in addition to their ordinary work as cultivators. Of the Sheikhs and Pathans, both of whom are Sunnis, the Pathan represents the majority of the Sunni cultivators. He is a staunch Muslim and is recognized generally by a beard typical of his class, with moustaches trimmed short or shaved in the middle. He follows strictly the teachings of Islam, especially in the matter of regular prayers and fasting during the month of *Ramzan*. In places where he is in a small minority and very much influenced by the Hindu majority, he will enjoy such Hindu festivals as *Diwali* and *Holi*. This applies, however, to the illiterate cultivator only.

The Muslim cultivator gets his children taught to read the Holy Quran but not necessarily to read Urdu. The children are taught to respect their religious observances. The Pathan cultivator of Oudh is generally well built and of robust health. He is both industrious and skilful. He leads a simple life, wearing a cloth like a *dhoti* known as the *tahband*, and a shirt or *kurta*. These are made of village-spun cloth. During winter he wears, in addition, a rustic form of a tight-fitting garment known as a *Shaluka* in which, between the lining and the cover, is stuffed a liberal amount of cotton. His bedding at night consists

of a mattress of paddy straw, either on the ground or on a cot, and a covering of rough cloth. His food consists chiefly of pulses, vegetables, rice and unleavened bread made of either wheat, barley, maize or *bajra*. When he eats meat, it is generally beef. He both chews and smokes tobacco.

The young Muslim cultivator marries between the age of fifteen and twenty. The parents do their best to provide money for feasts, dances and the presentation of silver ornaments to the bride.

His womenfolk help the Muslim cultivator in his daily work in the fields. Both take pride in raising good crops. The standard of cultivation is generally good, and plenty of manure obtained from the cattle is used. He is also industrious in providing irrigation from wells for his crops. Being a shrewd and intelligent man, the Muslim cultivator of Oudh looks upon his profession from a business point of view and is generally a successful cultivator.

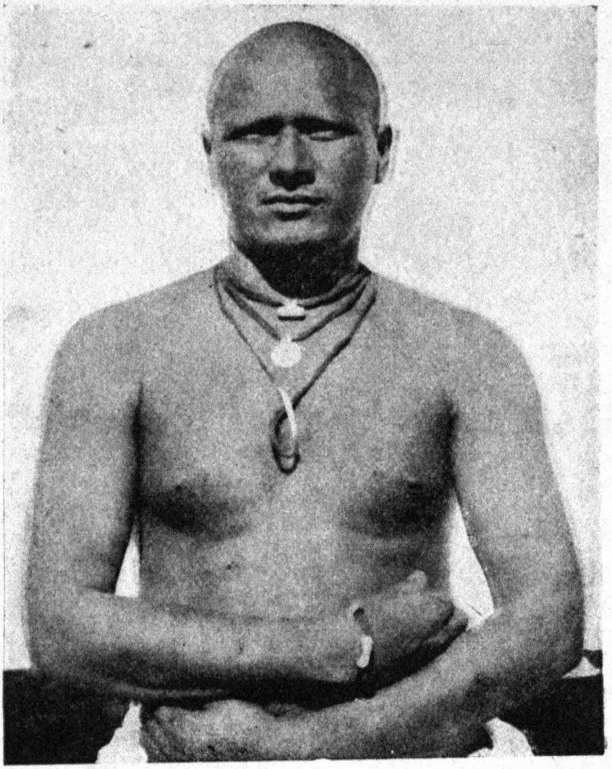
3. The Kurmi Cultivator

By M. Mohiuddin Ahmad

THE Kurmi or Kumbi is a good, hardworking cultivator. Agriculture is his main and hereditary occupation. His way of life is simple. His womenfolk do not observe *purdah* and are free to work outdoors without any social hindrance or harm. Widow remarriage is common among them. It is true that in olden days they were not recognized in the higher social groups of the Hindu caste system, but they were never classed as untouchables. From ancient times they have been occupying the advantageous position of the producers of food with a ready market.

•A Muslim (Pathan) cultivator of Oudh

[PLATE 14



A Kurmi cultivator of the United Provinces

[PLATE 15

With the establishment of a stable form of Government, the various legislative measures gave security of tenure and removed other disabilities in the way of ordinary farmers. Then the Kurmi made rapid strides in economic matters and today we find some very big landlords amongst Kurmis. The key of economic prosperity and solvency of an average Kurmi family of farmers is his industry, simplicity and docility. The head of a Kurmi family will rise generally an hour before sunrise. He will have a few puffs at his *hookah* and will finish his morning ablutions. He will go to his fields and start work at sunrise with other members of his family, leaving a few women at home to take care of the children and cook food for all. After working for about three hours he stops work for about half an hour for breakfast. Breakfast mostly consists of parched grain and sometimes *gur*. After breakfast work is resumed and is continued till about noon when he returns home. He takes his bath in a river, tank or well according to the facilities available and then enjoys his midday meal. After finishing this meal he rests for a while, and then sets off for work in the fields till sunset.

On his return from the day's work in the field he gets busy at home with some indoor occupation such as the care of cattle and livestock, extraction of fibre from sunn-hemp, making ropes and string, *tat*-weaving (rough cloth), and so on for a few hours till the night meal is ready. This meal is taken at about 9 P.M. and then he retires for the night.

The agriculture of Kurmis, despite its antiquity, is still primitive and largely empirical. Modern scientific developments, which have revolutionized the agriculture of other civilized countries, have had but little effect on the agricultural practices of Kurmis. They handle the

same type of wooden plough today which was used by their forefathers from time immemorial. Their general illiteracy, deep-rooted superstitions, and small and scattered holdings are some of the great impediments in the way of their progress. No wonder, then, that the agriculture practised under such conditions should remain unaffected by modern improvements. It is rather creditable to the Kurmi cultivator that, working against heavy odds, he manages to produce excellent crops on his fields and very successfully competes with more advantageously placed cultivators. He possesses a very clear knowledge of agriculture as a result of tradition handed down from generation to generation and is perfect in the art of crop raising. Every Kurmi cultivator commits to memory a large number of sayings on different agricultural subjects, such as preparation of seed-bed, time of sowing, manuring, weather forecasts, livestock, and so on. Ghagh, the originator of most of these agricultural sayings, is said to have been a very intelligent Kurmi cultivator.

A Kurmi farmer is generally guided in his agricultural practice by experience, both hereditary and acquired, and by these agricultural sayings. He uses simple and cheap implements and keeps one pair of bullocks for every five acres of land. He also keeps two to four milch animals on his farm. He likes and plants some fruit trees on his holding. Such fruits are generally mangoes, *kathal*, *mahua*, *jamun*, *ber*. He grows also a few clumps of bamboos which he requires for the repair of his houses and other agricultural work. He prefers to have a masonry well on his holding for the irrigation of his crops, but, unfortunately, in the majority of cases the conditions do not permit of this.

To augment his agricultural income the Kurmi farmer generally takes to some other work such as (1) making

ropes and strings, (2) weaving *tats*, (3) plying carts for hire, and (4) service on another village farm or in towns as *chaukidar*, *chaprasi* or *munshi*.

The house of an average Kurmi is generally built of mud walls and has a tiled roof. It consists of a central courtyard surrounded on all sides by rooms. There is generally one entrance facing east, north or west. An entrance facing south is considered inauspicious. He keeps his cattle in thatched sheds. The rooms of the residential house serve also as store-rooms for farm stock and generally one or more rooms are reserved for this purpose.

The diet of a Kurmi farmer is extremely simple. In fact, it is doubtful whether he ever has a well-balanced diet, from the scientific standpoint. The breakfast consists of parched grain or *sattu* (gram and barley ground together) with or without *gur*. The midday meal is *sattu*, parched grain with *gur* and inferior milk products. Occasionally he takes boiled rice, or pulse *chapatti*. The night meal consists mainly of *chapatti*, boiled rice and pulses occasionally; also some home-grown vegetables cooked with oil or ghee. Seasonal fruits such as mangoes, *ber*, etc. are taken if available in the home orchard.

The dress of the Kurmi farmer is very simple. The man is content with a pair of *dhoties*, a *banian* (vest) with half-sleeves, an *angoochha* (towel), a bed-mat or *sujni* (coarse undersheet) and a *chaddar* or sheet during summer. In winter he requires one double cotton *kurta* (shirt) and either a blanket or a quilt in addition.

A Kurmi woman requires a pair of *dhoties*, two jackets, one *sujni* and one quilt per year, a *lahnga* (skirt) on ceremonial occasions or an ordinary *sari*, with no underwear. Children below five years are provided with two

or three shirts and a cap. For ceremonial occasions they generally have finer clothes.

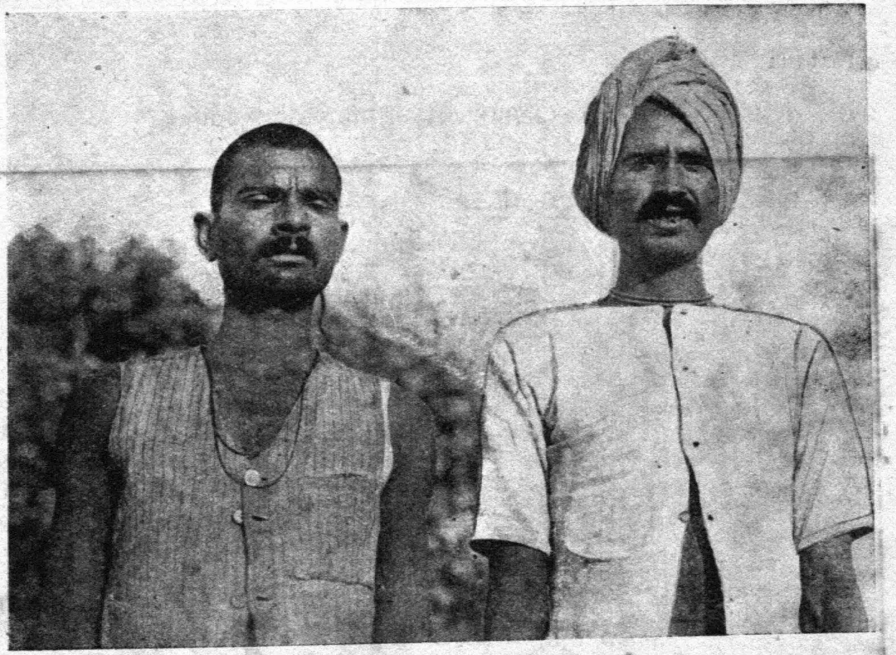
The amusements of Kurmis are also very simple. The Kurmi children play different games such as *kabaddi*, *dola pati*, *chikia*, *dudari* (all team games), *gulli danda* (tip-cat), *goli* (marbles), wrestling, *dund*, *baithaks* (physical exercises) and so on. The adults generally sit together in a *chaupal*—an open thatched room—and chat in the afternoon and after work at night. The recitation of the *Ramayana*, local songs (*birha*, *lorik*) and story-telling are common features. At religious festivals they attend local *melas* and fairs of which there are plenty.

4. The Bundelkhand Cultivator

By C. H. Parr

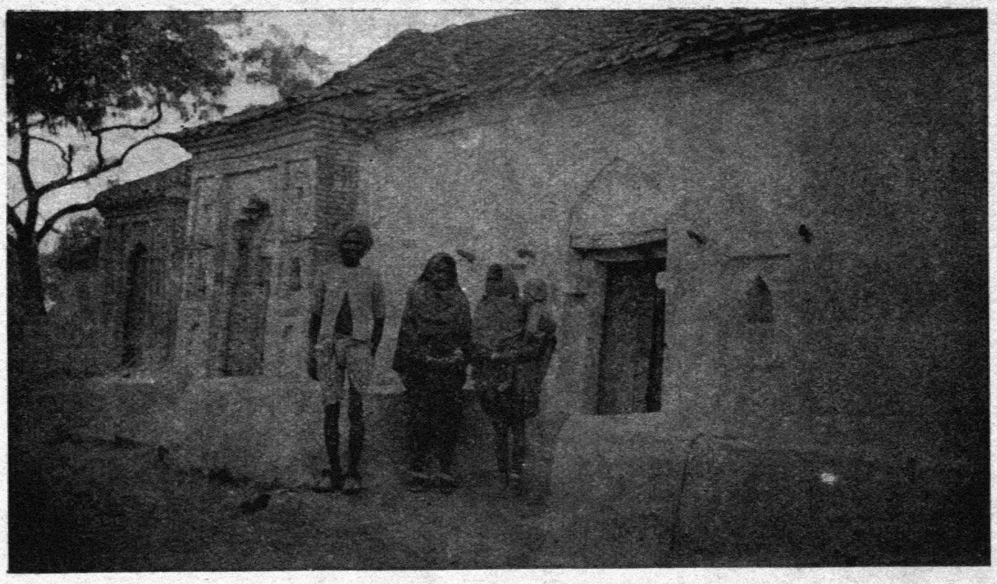
ALTHOUGH the Bundelkhandi may not appear at all out of place in many parts of Central India, in the United Provinces he is a type somewhat apart. But if the countryside which produces him is compared with the rest of the province some differences in the man are only to be expected.

Geologically, Bundelkhand is a piece of Central India, the natural features of which have little in common with the remainder of the province in which it is included. Here are no extensive plains of rich alluvium, watered by slow-flowing rivers, but undulating expanses made up of soils widely varying in character and of quite another nature and origin. In such a country, with its confused and rocky hills, its fast-flowing streams, lined usually with a maze of ravines, it is not surprising to find an agriculturist and a system of agriculture distinct from that of the remainder of the province.



Typical Bundelkhand cultivators

[PLATE 16



A Bundelkhand cultivator and his family

[PLATE 17

Though subject in a general way to the same vicissitudes of life as the average cultivator of northern India, historic, social, and climatic conditions have combined to produce here a tiller of the soil, whose outlook on life is sufficiently distinct to appear a little foreign to other cultivators of the same province.

As a cultivator he has a reputation for being somewhat lazy and easygoing; as a man, a cheerful optimist relying largely on custom and even superstition to guide him. Nevertheless, he has developed a system of agriculture which deals quite effectively with the cultivation of the varying types of soils under the difficult weather conditions which are his heritage, for nature has not been too generous to him. Historic conditions too have been against him. The Moghul, Maratha, and Bundela invasions may have been forgotten, but a sense of security is a thing of slow growth. Enterprise, moreover, is not encouraged where crops are largely at the mercy of the fluctuating seasons, where in favourable years little is required to secure average crops, but in others the most industrious husbandry often fails to ward off disaster.

His agriculture is therefore of the extensive type. Proper soil preparation has to give place to hurried tillage and single crops to mixtures like gram and wheat, and gram and linseed, or even gram, linseed and wheat in the *rabi*, and *til* and *arhar*, or *jowar* and *arhar* in the *kharif*. In the hope of striking a lucky combination of a large sown area and a favourable season, more land is farmed than can be properly controlled with the man and bullock-power available. These conditions are well suited to the *kans* weed which in many areas takes a heavy toll, and, spreading fastest in the seasons most favourable for crops, robs the cultivator of most in those very years when it

would be expected that he would be able to put a little aside as a reserve.

It is true that the Bundelkhandi has methods for dealing with this pest. But they are extensive too. If a *kańs*-infested area is left for grazing for about fifteen years, or flooded with water for a season or two, much of the *kans* is destroyed; but not for him the method of direct attack with a *phowra* (spade). His natural distaste for the *phowra* is shown again in the comparative lack of *bunds* to prevent the run-off of rain water, which in his retentive *mar* and *kabar* soils and undulating contours, would go far to mitigate the ill effects of badly distributed rainfall and loss of fertility by erosion.

With cattle his ideas also run on extensive lines. Status and wealth are in many areas largely judged by numbers, which extensive grazing facilities do much to encourage. With fluctuating seasons, cattle share with their owners the experiences of both want and plenty. In good seasons when grass is to be had for the cutting, *jowar* stalks can be seen left uncut in the fields, though they may prove an infernal nuisance and clog up the plough and *bakhar* (blade-harrow) when the land is being prepared for the succeeding crop. Where such practices prevail, a cultivator has only himself to blame if he earns a reputation for indolent optimism.

In hard times, however, the Bundelkhandi can make the best of the scanty resources at his disposal, and though he may lack in persistence and moral courage, in physical pluck he is not wanting. His work is usually planned to meet his immediate needs and a high value is set on leisure. Display is not one of his failings, but on occasions, as at marriages, he is as inclined to indulge in improvident extravagance as do cultivators in many other parts of India.

His diet is simple and, though coarse, appears both satisfying and nutritive. *Jowar* is his staple food in winter but wheat and gram (*bejhar*) take its place in summer. With *mahera*, i.e. crushed *jowar* and buttermilk, *gur* and *mahua* fruit, *mung* and *arhar*, he is able to add variety and other nutritive elements to his diet. Brinjal, onions and chillies are his chief vegetables. In ghee and milk he is probably better off than cultivators in many other parts of the province, as extensive grazing areas permit of cattle, of somewhat low quality, to be kept in rather considerable numbers.

His home surroundings have an appearance of both comfort and happiness. The house, usually two or three-roomed, though low, is substantially built, often brick and stone as well as mud being used in the walls. Both house and courtyard walls are roofed with red tiles. The doors are particularly substantial and characteristically low in height, a fashion probably dating back to the stormy days when the countryside was subject to visitations of marauding invaders, but now explained as a custom which makes anyone entering first bow as a sign of respect. About the houses is an air of cleanliness and neatness which does credit to the womenfolk responsible for them. On each side of the entrance is a neatly made platform regularly plastered every *amawas* (new moon), and *purnama* (full moon). Here the family gather and enjoy much of their leisure in chat with their neighbours.

Besides being responsible for the cultivator's house, the Bundelkhand woman shares much of the burden of the work in the fields, where, on ordinary days, her characteristic red *dhoti* gives to the ever-changing rural setting a splash of colour which, on high days and holidays, is further heightened by a red *chadder* and *lahnga*.

With heavy *pajeva* (bangles) on her ankles, made usually of brass or zinc, hollow and carrying loose jingling copper balls inside them, she usually has music of sorts wherever she goes. This heavy gear which adorns the women's ankles, and the men's heavily soled leather shoes with their flaps and turned up toes, made to give real protection from thorns and stones, have earned for the Bundelkhandi considerable distinction in foot-wear. This shoe, made in pieces, all of which are separately replaceable. is definitely practical in its construction, though so heavy that the economically-minded often prefer to carry them wherever enough smooth going permits.

The Bundelkhandi's future is not without its brighter prospects. His countryside is faced with no problems of overpopulation. There is little pressure on the land, even in the canal-irrigated areas. In his soil is undoubted wealth waiting to reward the industrious. It is a pity that the Bundelkhand's virtues are so largely negative ones. His country needs a persistent and positive type of agriculturist, who can set a course of land development, and stick to it, no matter the weather or the seasons. It calls for men willing to put muscle into measures to conserve the soil to stop the drain which wash and erosion take of its wealth. For centuries it has been asked to respond to hand-to-mouth and pauperized systems of farming, and it is hardly a wonder that its soils now respond somewhat grudgingly. But the Bundelkhandi is slowly learning that his extensive systems do his soils no good. and that in irrigated areas he often wastes both labour and water, and slowly he is becoming aware that the response of the land to sunshine and to rain, fickle as the latter may often be, is somewhere proportionate to the fertilizing material and the cultivation he is prepared to put into it.

5. The Turk Cultivator of Rohilkhand

By Munshi Tasawwar Husain Naqvi

ROHILKHAND is a part of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh comprising the districts of Moradabad, Bijnor, Budaun, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly and the state of Rampur. Literally speaking, Rohilkhand means the abode of the mountaineers. The name is derived from the Rohilla, a tribe of Afghan highlanders, who conquered this region towards the beginning of the eighteenth century. It covers an area of about 11,000 sq. miles and has a population of 5,481,577.

The Turk who represents a typical cultivator of this area is, however, a much older resident of Hindustan. His origin dates back from the invasion of Mohammed Ghori in the year 1192 A.D. Under the command of Salar Masud Gazi, one of Mohammed's generals, the Turks overran the greater part of the United Provinces till their progress was checked by the general's death in Behraich.

Though the Turk has settled down to a peaceful life of cultivation and hard toil, he has not forgotten the martial traditions of his race and the fierceness of his name and history are in no way belied. The intervening centuries have left no mark upon the soldier who came to India more than 700 years ago, but at the same time they have produced an exceptionally good type of farmer who plies his spade and plough with as much zeal and vigour as his ancestors wielded their swords. Efficiency, self-reliance, diligence and a religious outlook almost amounting to fanaticism are characteristic of these Turk cultivators. The Turk's hospitality is proverbial and no one can return from his door without partaking of *sharbat* in summer and milk in winter. A *hookah* smoke is, of course, always offered. The Turk cultivator is also very kind to his animals.

As a cultivator, the Turk has acquired practical skill of a very high order which is embodied in his *reets* or proverbs. Put to the test of scientific knowledge, the *reets* are very instructive and accurate. It will not be out of place to quote a few of them here.

Cheede cheede til bhale aur cheedi bhali kapas
Jeski cheedi eekh rahe uski nahin jineki aas.

'*Til* and cotton should be thinly sown but a man with a thin crop of cane should not hope to live.'

Ghanna gehun boey ek bai aur eekh boey teh bai
Larki ho tari khari Assar boey bari.

'If you have a virgin daughter to marry and want money, sow your wheat thickly behind the plough, your sugarcane with three ploughs and your cotton in *assar* with the rains.'

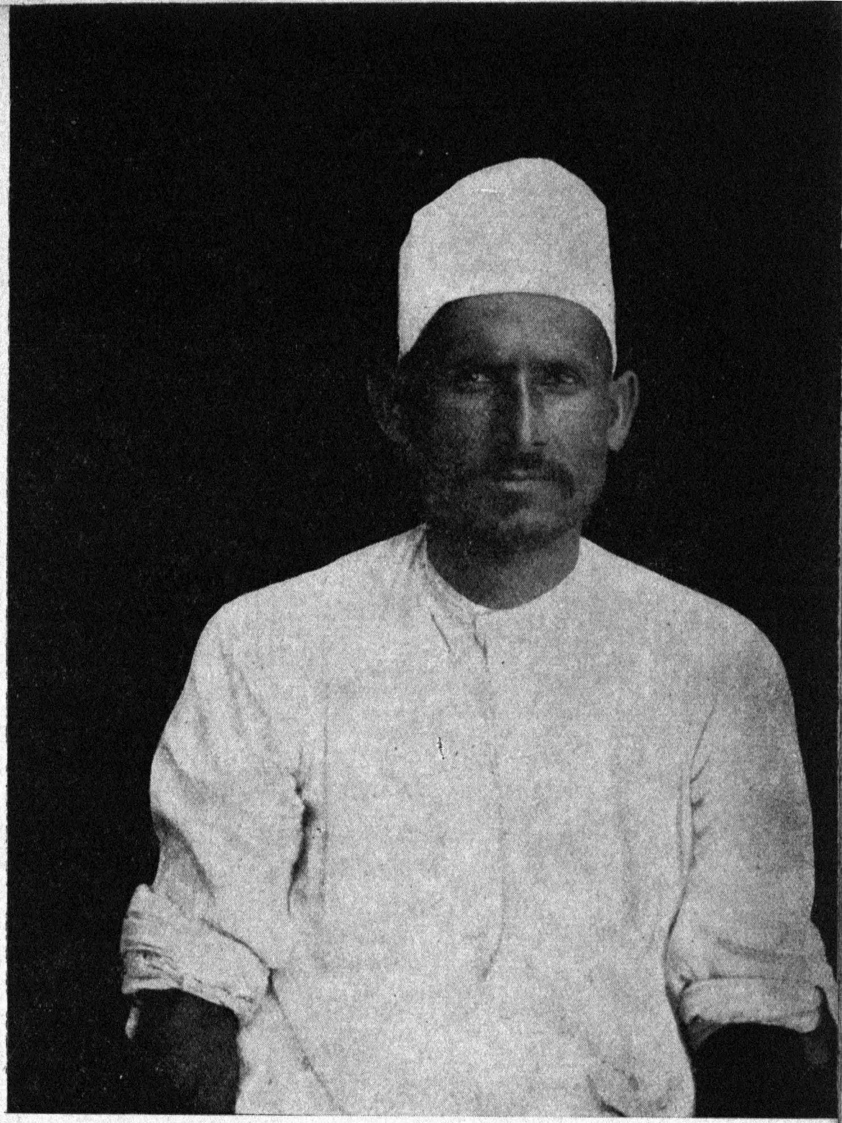
Dhan ghanna ban beghara, mendak phudki jowar.
Pehre pehre bajra to ghore ghoomen dewar.

'If you wish to be rich and have horses at your doors, sow your paddy thick, your cotton thin, your *jowar* at a frog's leap and your *bajra* a step apart.'

There is a large number of such proverbs; in fact, for every agricultural operation some proverb or other comes handy to guide his conduct in the fields.

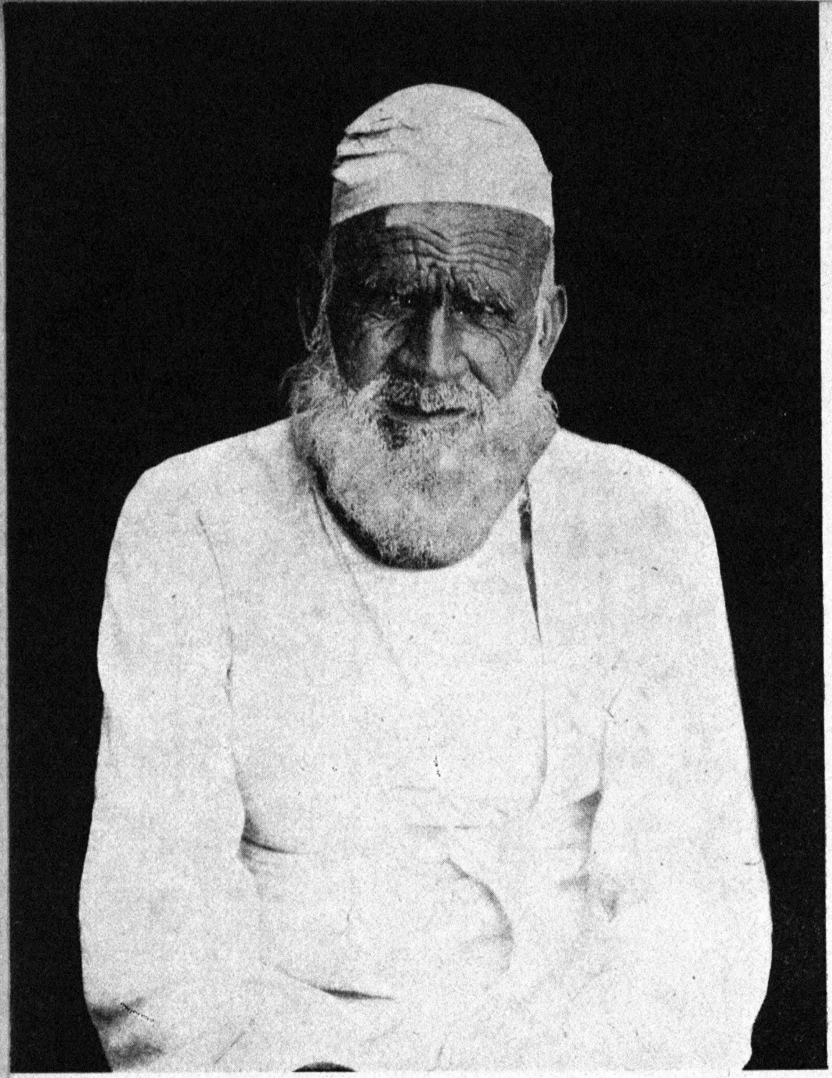
Suspicious of any outside interference, the Turk villages are closely knit together into a *bradry* (brotherhood) whose affairs are controlled by panchayats with annually elected *sardars* (presidents) at their heads. Usually a learned old man is chosen for the purpose. As the word signifies, the *sardar* is the greatest man in the *bradry*.

The panchayat raises a small subscription from the members to meet those expenses that are collectively incurred by the whole *bradry*. It controls all the activities of the community both internal and external. Decisions



A young Turk of Rohilkhand

[PLATE 18



An old Turk

[PLATE 19

on important matters are taken only after consulting the whole *bradry*, and once taken are binding on every member. Any flouting of this general will by an individual, any disregard of established custom, or some moral turpitude, is immediately dealt with by the panchayat. The delinquent is ostracized, or in their parlance is subjected to *hookah pani band karna*. This means that the man thus punished is not respectable enough to smoke the same *hookah* or drink from the same bowl as the honourable *brodry*. If the offender repents and expresses a desire to expiate his guilt, he must atone for it by means of a feast to the whole community. The choice of the dishes rests with the latter. This is an excellent check on those who are mischievously inclined and tends to encourage good conduct and orderly behaviour.

Marriage, the most important event of a man's life, is settled among the Turks, as amongst most other communities in this country, by the parents of the couple. It consists of two parts—the *nikah*, a religious ceremony, and the *rukhsat*, the actual taking away of the bride. The *nikah* is often performed at an early age when the bride and bridegroom are ten or twelve years old. It is a strictly religious ceremony, two *maulvis* acting as agents, one for the boy and the other for the girl. After reciting verses from the Holy Quran, the contract is sealed and entries made in the *maulvis'* books. *Sharbat* and dried dates are then distributed to the company and legally they are husband and wife. But the actual consummation takes place after the *rukhsat* which is usually done at a more mature age. *Rukhsat* is the time for celebration and feasting. The bridegroom and his party visit the bride's home and are entertained by her parents to a feast of *bhat* (boiled rice) and *urdgosht* (meat and pulse curry) Having

enjoyed themselves for two or three days at the bride's expense, the bridegroom and the party, which consists exclusively of men, return home with the bride. The couple depart in a *rath*, a decorated bullock chariot, while the others ride home in *rabbas* or light two-wheeled bullock carts. On reaching home, the bridegroom also celebrates the occasion by feasting the whole *bradry* if he can afford to do so, or at least by entertaining his friends and near relatives. The month of May is the marriage season, as by that time both the sugarcane and *rabi* crops have been harvested and there is some money to spend.

In a Turk family, duties are strictly apportioned between the men and the women. Men are responsible for cultivation and other outdoor work, while the women manage the household, take care of the cattle, grind the corn, milk the animals, make ghee, and sew and spin. Of the income, the portion derived from the sale of dung-cakes is the woman's exclusive share, which she usually spends in buying ornaments. A Turk wife is obedient and faithful.

A Turk village is divided into *abadi* and the *har*. The *abadi* or populated portion is situated on a higher level from the *har*, which is the surrounding cultivated area. Every village invariably possesses a mosque where men, devoutly inclined, offer their prayers. A *mulla* is usually in charge of the mosque and is maintained by the community. In addition to officiating at prayer-time, it is also a part of the *mulla's* duty to teach reading the Holy Quran to the village boys. The girls are not generally initiated into the art as reading and writing are not considered good for the fair sex.

The houses are usually of mud and thatch and consist of a living room, a kitchen a *saar* or cattle shed and a

courtyard, the whole being surrounded by a wall, as the women observe *purdah*. The well-to-do Turk also keeps a *chowpal* outside the *purdah* wall. *Chowpals* are the meeting places or clubs of the men where they smoke and chat in the evenings. The size of the house and the presence of the *chowpal* denote the prosperity of the family. All Turk houses are scrupulously clean, being plastered with mud and whitewashed with *pindol* or white clay twice a year, i.e. before and after the rains.

The clothing requirements of a Turk are few. During working hours he puts on a *dhoti*, a *bundi* and a cap, while on festive occasions or when visiting another village he uses a *pajama*, a shirt, a *mundasa* or turban and a shoulder cloth (which is the equivalent of a gigantic handkerchief), and also indulges in the rare luxury of a pair of shoes. In winter a *chaddar* (thick *khaddar* cloth) or a *mirzai* (a jacket stuffed with cotton) is worn during the day, while at night a *razai* (cotton-stuffed quilt) serves the purpose of both mattress and cover. The universal dress among the women is a *pajama*, a *kurti* or shirt, and a *dupatta* or head cover which also serves as a veil when they go out. Ornaments are of course indispensable and are generally of silver.

The daily food of a Turk consists of *roti* (unleavened bread), *dal*, *gur*, *matha* (skim milk) and *sag* or weeds picked up from the fields. Rice, meat and vegetables are occasional luxuries. Three meals are taken during the day, beginning with breakfast at 9 A.M. in the fields. The second meal is taken at about 1 P.M. on returning home from work and the third at sunset. Guavas, melons and mangoes are the only fruits which he can afford.

Ghee-production and *khandsari* or indigenous sugar manufacture are the only two subsidiary paying industries.

Although rearing cattle, especially buffaloes, is very common, it is considered below the dignity of a Turk to sell milk. He can only deal in ghee and must use the skim milk at home. A similar prejudice exists against hiring out bullocks or carts. *Khandsars* are owned only by the well-to-do Turks, but this is a far-famed industry of Rohilkhand and there is no doubt some of them are past masters in the art of *rab*-making. The industry has been famous for centuries and a story is told how the Emperor Akbar once tasted the sugar produced by the Turks and thenceforward always ordered his supplies from them. Basket-making is also practised, but not on an extensive scale and is not very remunerative.

The only occasions when a Turk gets an opportunity for a little merry-making are the festivals of *Id* and *Charyan*. Both of them are, however, essentially religious in character. The *Id* is the thanksgiving festival for the successful termination of *Ramzan*, the month of fasting among Mussulmans. After the thanksgiving prayers, gaily dressed parties visit one another and are entertained to *siwanyan* (macaroni) and milk, while everyone embraces everyone else. *Charyan* is the name given to a *mela* held to commemorate the anniversary of Salar Masud Ghazi's invasion. The occasion is celebrated in every village in which the Ghazi camped on his way to Bahraich. *Dungles* (wrestling) and fencing matches are held on this day and other feats of strength shown. The winners are garlanded, taken out in procession, and feasted. Bullock racing is also a favourite amusement and attracts large crowds. The religious side is, however, never forgotten. Alms are freely distributed and the poor fed by everyone according to his means.

The economy of a Turk village is based on barter. At harvest, every Turk cultivator pays the village

A typical Turk enjoying his hookah

[PLATE 20

carpenter, the blacksmith, the sweeper and the barber a certain portion of his produce for their services during the previous six months.

V

THE PUNJAB CULTIVATOR

By Amanat Khan

THE Punjab, known as the 'Sword Arm of India', is also famous for its sturdy and virile peasantry, which forms its backbone. The Punjabi cultivator has not only proved his mettle on the far-flung battlefields of the Empire, but he is well equipped with enough agricultural experience to carry on in the face of numerous obstacles, difficulties and handicaps.

The cultivators of the Punjab are composed of a number of tribes which claim different origins but possess the same mode of life and general habits. These tribes are not generally localized in special tracts, but are met with throughout the province, predominating in certain districts, while being in a minority in others. The customs of the tribes vary with their religion, while the agricultural practices in vogue depend on the climatic conditions prevailing in the tracts occupied and on the system of irrigation followed there. Some of the traits and characteristics possessed by the cultivators are tribal, recognizing no religious or geographical boundaries.

Sometimes the Punjabi cultivator appears to be conservative, but he is always willing to take up anything new, once he is convinced of its practical utility.

He is simple, sincere and hospitable, and is loyal to old and established traditions. He has many weaknesses and defects too, such as superstition, extravagance (particularly when deaths and marriages occur) and has a proclivity to religious fanaticism. With the spread of education, however, there is a slow improvement. He

responds more to tactful handling and persuasion than to coercion.

The common food of a Punjabi cultivator is fairly nourishing. Milk, milk products, vegetables, particularly *sag* (greens) and pulses, are the most important and common articles of diet throughout the province. Among the grains taken in the form of *chapatis* wheat is most important, but in tracts where *bajra* and maize are grown, wheat is generally supplemented or replaced by them during the winter months. Gram and barley are eaten by the poorer classes, who cannot afford wheat. With the exception of Kangra and parts of Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Sialkot and Dera Ghazi Khan where rice is grown and consumed largely, it is considered a luxury, and is used only on ceremonial occasions or for a change. Pulses and *sag* are commonly used in all parts of the province.

Milk and its products, such as *lassi* (buttermilk), ghee and curd are consumed throughout the year though the quantities consumed vary with the economic condition of the cultivators. Ghee, being costly, is used sparingly by poor cultivators and the surplus is sold in the towns by the housewife. In the districts where sugarcane is grown, *gur* and sugar are largely used, and when the crushing of cane is in progress large quantities of raw juice are drunk. Meat, being expensive, is consumed by those Muslim and Sikh cultivators who can afford it.

The number of meals taken in a day and the time when they are served vary slightly in different parts of the province, but the regular meals of a Punjabi cultivator are two. One of these is served in the forenoon, and the other after sunset. In addition to these two regular meals, two light ones, one at about eight in the

morning and the other in the afternoon at about four, are also usually taken, during the busy season.

Like his food, the dress of a Punjabi cultivator is very simple. It consists of a turban usually of mill-made cloth varying in length according to the local custom and the social standing of the wearer. The *kurta* or shirt is a loose garment, usually made of *khaddar* (home-spun cloth) and varying in design according to the local practice. The lower portion of the body is covered by a sheet of cloth also made of *khaddar* called by different names such as *tahmat*, *lungi* and *chadar*. This garment usually reaches to the ankle. When at work, especially during the summer months, this cloth is replaced by a shorter garment called the *langota*, which terminates at the knees. Sikh cultivators use the *katchera* as underwear over which they put the loin-cloth. Simple shoes (*juties*) and sandals (*chaplies*) are commonly used as footwear. These are made in the villages. In winter the garments are made of thicker and coarser material, and in addition locally-made wrappers are used. In the case of the women there is greater variation in dress. On ceremonial occasions garments made of mill-made cloth are usually put on.

From the incessant toil, hardship and struggle, which are the lot of a cultivator in the Punjab, he finds relief in fairs and marriages. One such occasion is the annual festival of *Baisakhi* which marks the beginning of the harvesting season. Among the common sports in the province are *kabadi* and *pir-kaudi*, wrestling, lifting and throwing heavy weights. In *pir-kaudi* one man runs and is pursued by two men who try to catch him. He strikes with his hands each of his pursuers in turn and then tries to escape. If he is caught during the act of touching the

pursuers he loses the game, but if after hitting them he runs away, he wins.

There are four types of Punjabi cultivators with distinct tribal characteristics.

The Jat

Of all the agricultural tribes found in the province, Jats are by far the most important. Not only do they excel other tribes in the art of crop husbandry (with the exception of vegetable growing in which the Arain leads), but they are also found in large numbers scattered all over the province. They predominate in some of the south-eastern and central districts, but are met with also in the other districts of the province.

The Jats are generally of good physique and are very hardy. They make good ploughmen and brave soldiers. For perseverance, hard work and continuous toil it is very difficult to beat a Jat. A Jat is proud of his profession and is so closely attached to the land that he is always prepared to sacrifice everything to prevent anyone taking his ancestral land from him.

Tribal instincts die hard in the Jats and the memory of old family feuds remains ever fresh in their minds. The Jat is, on the whole, of quiet and orderly disposition, but when roused to anger the fighting instinct in him gets the upper hand, unhinging him and upsetting his equilibrium. In some parts of the country, in addition to the household duties, the Jatni or Jatti (wife of the Jat) also helps her husband in all light field-work.

Jats in the Punjab profess all the three religions of the province, and this change in religion has brought about certain changes in the tribal characteristics. For example, the Sikh business instinct has resulted in the Sikh Jats taking up trade.

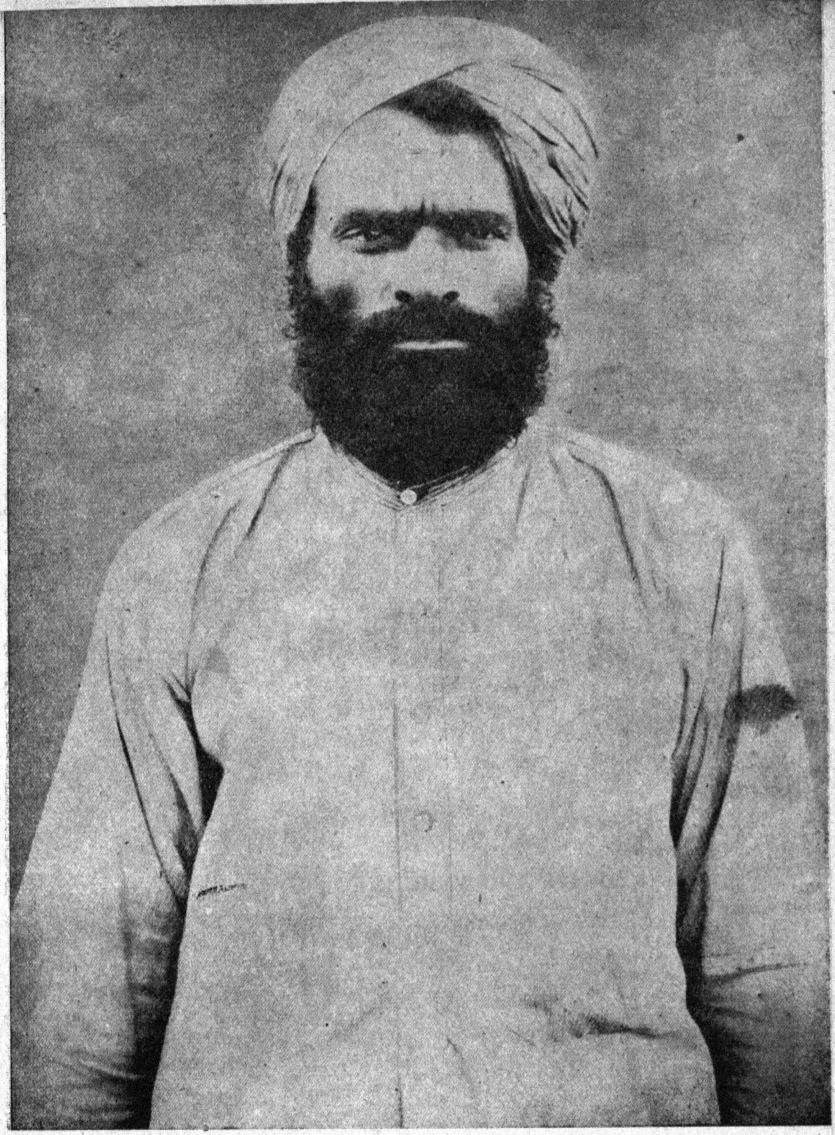
The Rajput

The word 'Rajput' is composed of two Hindi words—*raj* and *put*, meaning the son of a Raja. This tradition of princely origin has imparted a certain sense of superiority to the tribe, rendered the Rajput perhaps less inclined to hard work and until quite recently rather averse to agriculture in spite of the fact that a large portion of the land in the Punjab belonged to this tribe.

The race still possesses certain graces. The Rajputs are generally of fine build, handsome, and make good soldiers. The love of horse-breeding, hunting and hawking, and their open-handedness make Rajput landowners fine country squires. They are usually kind to their tenants, who seek their protection and guidance at all times of difficulty. They generally lead the countryside in social activities and are looked upon as models of propriety. Their old men are considered as *grands seigneurs*. Their advice is sought by the younger members of the family, and they exercise a certain amount of patriarchal influence over the countryside.

The womenfolk are strictly in *purdah* and do not therefore help in the fields. This custom is not confined to the richer classes, but is followed by the peasantry.

The Rajputs are found practically all over the province, and they hold a large portion of the land. But they predominate in some of the central districts of the Punjab, such as Hoshiarpur, Kangra and Ambala. Where, due to sub-division and fragmentation of holdings, a Rajput has taken up cultivation with his own hands, he cannot usually compete in skill with his fellow-cultivators, such as Arains and Jats. He considers it below his dignity to grow or sell vegetables, and for the same reason he seldom keeps poultry or increases his income by the disposal of surplus commodities such as milk or ghee.



A Jat cultivator of the Punjab

[PLATE 21

A Rajput cultivator

[PLATE 22

The Arain

The Arains claim a Semitic origin and Arabia as their ancestral home. The Arain is invariably Muslim, and in his continuous industry, tenacity of purpose, perseverance and agricultural skill comes second only to the Jat in the cultivation of general crops. In raising garden crops he stands unrivalled. While the Jat and the Rajput, particularly the latter, look back to the established customs and old traditions to guide them as to what crops they should grow, the Arain, being more practical, pays no exaggerated attention to the past but takes up any enterprise which he considers sound. No work is below his dignity as long as it yields him a living wage. The Arain usually possesses a small piece of land and works very hard to maintain his family. It is amazing how he overcomes economic difficulties by constant struggle and thrifty habits. His capacity for work and his willingness to adapt himself to changed conditions are remarkable. He is sufficiently enterprising to go abroad to earn his living.

Obedient, hard-working and frugal, neither criminal nor extravagant in habits, the Arain is a model member of an agricultural community. Physically he is not as well built and strong as a Jat or a Rajput, but he is intelligent, and as a colonist he is as good as the Jat. In the old districts, where he is in the minority, an Arain may perhaps be looked down upon as lacking in enterprise and stamina, but this is not the case in the colonies.

The Arain has comparatively more experience of intensive cultivation and garden crops. He has established beyond doubt his reputation as a tenant and is welcomed by every landowner in the province.

Like the Jat, the Arain gets help from his womenfolk in light field-work. In the house the woman

is very economical and avoids all extravagance and waste.

The Jangli

The Janglis are an aboriginal tribe who, till recently, used to lead a nomadic life. They invariably profess the Mohammedan religion and are mostly found in the canal-irrigated tracts of the Multan division.

Prior to the opening of the Lower Chenab Canal and the colonization of the tract irrigated by it, the Jangli scrupulously kept to his nomadic habits, and refused to take to any settled mode of life. He would breed fine horses and cattle, particularly buffaloes, not with a view to making profit thereby, but primarily to satisfy his own sense of pride in possessing better animals than his neighbours. Cattle-lifting was not only considered a good sport, providing amusement for all men of courage, but was thought to be an unmistakable sign of superiority. This practice of cattle-lifting produced some of the best trackers in the country, who are usually in great demand in the villages whenever a theft takes place. Agriculture was left to dependants of inferior caste.

After the opening up of the canals, however, the Jangli could not remain unaffected. He soon realized that peaceful pursuits not only brought more reward, but provided better security. We now find him, along with other colonists, engaged in agricultural pursuits in the most fertile part of the province. The Jangli is apt to be extravagant and delights in adorning his womenfolk with trinkets. His hospitality knows no bounds. The Jangli possesses robust health and a good physique, which are mainly due to the dry climate of the tract, to the practice of marrying late and to his diet which is largely composed of meat, milk and milk products.

An Arain cultivator

[PLATE 23

A Jangli cultivator

[PLATE 24

During the last few decades customs, however, have considerably changed, and there is now unmistakable anxiety to marry his children at an early age.

The Janglis still keep to their clannish tendencies. The heads of their clans are aristocrats often possessing intelligence and ability. They exercise a patriarchal authority over their followers and are of real assistance to the Government. Despite benevolent Nature and a sympathetic Government, the Jangli is far from being satisfied with his lot. His main grievance appears to be that since colonization he has been deprived of the large grazing areas which he kept for his cattle to roam about and graze. He feels that his freedom has been restricted and he has been forced to handle the plough. His fields tend to be weedy and his plough cattle in poor condition. He will gladly spend large sums in the upkeep of a good horse, but will grudge concentrates to his bullocks.

His instinct for cleanliness in the house is well developed. Although *kaccha*, the houses are scrupulously clean and the household articles well arranged. This is due mostly to the womenfolk who not only keep the houses clean and tidy but buy and sell on behalf of their men as they are considered better bargainers.

VI

THE BIHAR CULTIVATOR

By D. R. Sethi

BIHAR is predominantly an agricultural province. With a total population of some 32 millions and a total cultivated area of 24 million acres the pressure on the land is heavy. In parts of the province where agricultural conditions are favourable the density of population per square mile is as high as 960.

The province has three natural agricultural divisions. The river Ganges divides Bihar proper into two parts. The area lying to the north of this river and extending up to the foot-hills of Nepal is known as North Bihar. Here the predominant soil type is light alluvium, the soil is high and moisture-holding capacity of the soil very good. There is a great diversity of crops, and almost all crops including sugarcane are grown without artificial irrigation. It is rare to find a field without a crop during the major part of the year. The pressure on the land in this part of the province is great.

The area south of the river Ganges is known as South Bihar. Here the predominant soil type is clay and the main crops are rice, sugarcane and *rabi* cereals and pulses. Irrigation is a necessity to ensure reasonable out-turns.

The third natural agricultural division of the province is the area comprising the Chota Nagpur plateau. The predominant population in this area is aboriginal and agriculture is not intensive: the main crop is rice which depends upon the monsoon for a successful harvest.

Eighty per cent of the people depend directly on agriculture. In Bihar proper almost all communities and castes are agriculturists, and standards of cultivation vary considerably. Amongst all the cultivating classes

A Koer cultivator of Bihar

[PLATE 25

in Bihar the most advanced are the Koeries or Kushwaha Kshatriyas. Simple in habits, thrifty to a degree and a master in the art of market-gardening, the Koer is amongst the best of the tillers of the soil to be found anywhere in India.

During his childhood the Koer indulges in village pastimes and games, chiefly *kabadi*. From his boyhood onwards his one passion is cultivation, and he devotes his whole time to his work in the field. Because of his thrifty habits he manages to keep clear of debt. In years of bountiful harvests he invests all his savings either in making additions to his holding or in improving it by providing himself with irrigation facilities or a good pair of bullocks.

He knows the value of good seed, conserves his manurial resources, looks after his work-cattle and goes in for intensive cultivation. He rarely hires labour but makes all members of his family, including his womenfolk, work in the fields. The result is that in a good year he is better off than his neighbours, while in a lean year he usually manages to make both ends meet.

The Koer does not indulge in expensive social ceremonies and spends less on marriages than other cultivating classes. He is religious and as a rule avoids intoxicants.

When he has leisure he takes great pleasure in reciting verses from religious books and joins in musical gatherings of a religious nature.

Such in brief is the life of this hard-working, intelligent and industrious son of the soil.

VII

THE CENTRAL PROVINCES CULTIVATOR

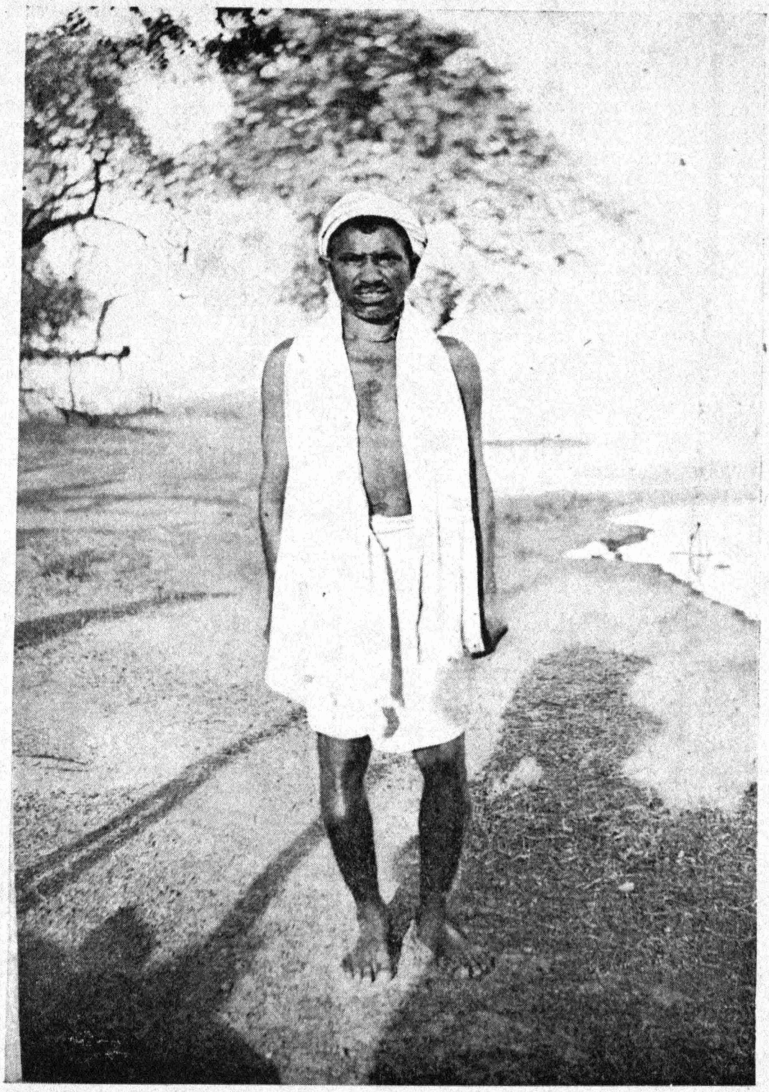
1. The Chhattisgarh Cultivator

By Rao Sahib D. R. Moharikar

SEVERAL varieties of soil are to be found in the typical Chhattisgarh village, ranging from *bhata* (red, gravelly soil) at the highest levels to heavy black soil in the low-lying portions. Intermediate types lie between these two extremes. Though a variety of crops could be grown under these conditions, paddy is the most favoured crop and occupies the biggest area. In some tracts where heavy soils abound, both *rabi* and *kharif* crops are grown.

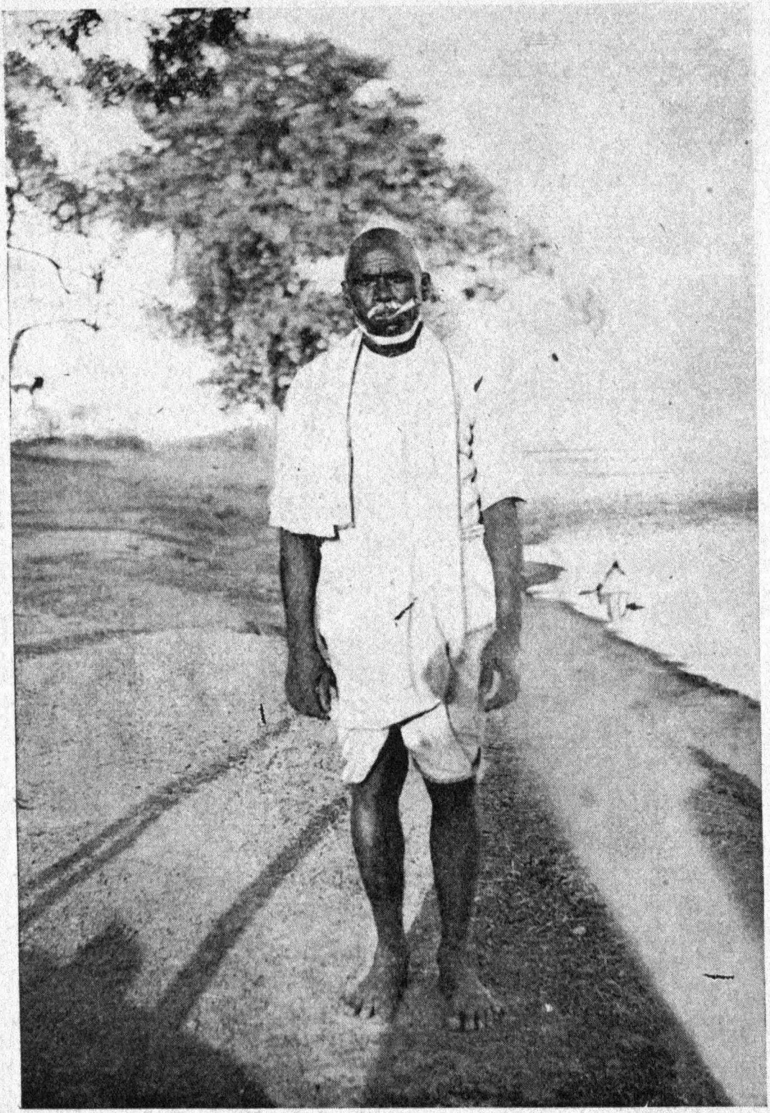
There are two main cultivating castes, the Telis and Satnamis. Both are simple and straightforward in character, but the latter is inclined to go to extremes when his feelings are roused by village factions. The chief articles of clothing are a *patka* (loin-cloth) and a *paga* (small turban). A country woollen blanket, a bamboo hat, a pair of sandals and a long bamboo stick complete his turnout for all seasons. He is of medium stature, brown complexion and fairly good physique.

His main meal consists of cooked rice served with either a pulse or seasonal vegetables, whichever be available. It is eaten in the evening after a day's hard work. A little rice is left over from the evening meal for the next day. This is put to soak in water and the result is *basi* which forms his next meal, taken at midday after his bath. On festive occasions he is very happy if his ordinary fare is supplemented with fish and *bhajias* (sweetened wheat or rice flour paste, fried in oil or ghee in small lumps). He cannot, however, forget his *chongi* (pipe) of which he is very fond; he will have it at any cost.



A Teli cultivator of Central Provinces

[PLATE 26



A Satnami cultivator of the Central Provinces

[PLATE 27

In the *basti* there is much overcrowding of houses. Of roads in the proper sense there are none: only narrow, tortuous lanes. The houses have mud walls and tiled roofs. It is customary to have small separate buildings to serve as kitchen, guest-room, sleeping accommodation, and cattle shed. Windows have no place in their houses. The only articles of furniture are a few cots made of bamboo and rope. The utensils include brass dishes and *lotas* and mud pots for cooking. Mud or bamboo bins are constructed in each house to store the produce of the fields.

Socially there is great unity among persons belonging to the same caste. Each caste has its own *panchas* who act as head of the caste and their decision is final in every caste quarrel. For breaking caste rules, persons are outcast. If any person of the lower caste beats a person of the upper caste, the latter is outcast. Inter-dining is also prohibited and outcasting is the punishment inflicted for this offence as well. The *panchas* assemble, frame charges against the accused who, if proved guilty, has to pay a fine before he can be readmitted. This fine is generally utilized to provide a feast for members of the caste who collect in great numbers on such occasions.

Betrothal is the first step in marriage; at times this takes place when the child is still in the womb. Child marriage is the general rule, but the girl is never sent to the husband's house till she attains the age of puberty. It is incumbent on the parties to invite all members of the caste to the ceremony, and as a general rule most of the people attend. Two or three dinners from the bride's side and one from the bridegroom's are sufficient for the ceremony. It is customary for the near relations to contribute something in kind to help the parents of the bride and bridegroom.

The Chhattisgarhi cultivator puts in just enough work to maintain himself and his family in a very humble way. In tracts where paddy is the only crop, his field work starts with manuring the fields in May, followed by sowing operations which commence with the break of the monsoon and last for a month. July and August are months of hard labour in the field for *biasi* and weeding operations. Once the paddy is in ear and wild rice (*karga*) is eliminated he gets some leisure. He finishes his harvesting and threshing by the end of December and has ample time at his disposal thereafter. The more needy supplement their earnings by undertaking carting work or other outside labour when there is nothing to do in the fields. In tracts where irrigation facilities are available, the cultivators plant sugarcane and thereby increase their income. Where *rabi* crops are grown as well as *kharif*, the cultivator is kept fully engaged. Scattered holdings are a great handicap in this tract, but the benefits of the consolidation now in progress are fully realized. The Chhattisgarhi cultivator is an expert in laying out catch-water drains in right contours to take the water from higher areas to his fields.

The main causes that have contributed to his poor financial position are neglect of manure and cattle. He burns two-thirds of the dung produced : one-third is preserved for manure. It is only of late that he has taken to better preservation of manure. He believes in keeping a large number of cattle, beyond his means to feed properly, with the result that their condition is wretched and he sustains great loss from deaths. This takes him to the moneylender, and once in his grip he is very much handicapped and enterprise ceases.

The tiller of the soil is very fond of attending weekly bazars, where both sexes flock in great numbers. He

will also observe the numerous festivals no matter how urgently field operations may claim his attention. He seems to forget his worries for the time being and enjoys these outings thoroughly. After all he is a proverbially contented man. This contentment is, however, not natural but has been brought about by the conditions under which he has been living. Every attempt on his part to improve his lot having proved a failure, he has begun to believe that he was destined to lead the sort of life he is leading and this has tended to kill all initiative. For this he himself is mainly responsible, though he does not realize it. He permits a number of leakages in his income of which the most important are expenses beyond his means for marriages or after a death in the family, wrong notions of charity which enable swindlers to deprive him of a good share of his produce at the time of threshing, advance credit purchases of clothing and utensils before harvest time at enhanced prices from itinerant dealers, and absence of any organization to save him from the loss sustained in the purchase of his requirements or in the sale of his produce. His case can be likened to that of a man trying to replenish a water pot with a number of holes in the bottom. The more he pours in, the greater the flow from the holes because of the extra pressure. It is, therefore, as necessary to stop the leakages as it is to increase his sources of income. It is very difficult to convince him of the merits of any improvement, but once convinced, he takes it up in right earnest and follows it with zeal. There are encouraging signs that he has begun to realize the importance of good seed, improved tillage and adequate manuring and that he is awakening to the possibility of utilizing these improvements for his own benefit and that of the moneylender. He is also beginning to see some meaning in the

suggestions for cooperative action which are being patiently made to him by various Government departments.

2. The Gond Cultivator

By Verrier Elwin

THE Gond's attachment to the good earth is illustrated by a story told me by an old peasant in Kawardha State. God was wondering who should carry on the work of the world. So He made this test. He prepared three chairs, one of gold, one of silver and one of earth. Then He called a Mussulman, a Hindu and a Gond and asked them to choose which they would. The Mussulman sat down in the golden chair, the Hindu took the silver chair, but the Gond chose the earthen chair. Then God said : 'It is the Gond who will carry on the work of the world, for only he who can sit on an earthen chair will be able to bear the hardships that are bound to come.' And so God made the Gonds the support and refuge of the world.

And indeed, out of the three million Gonds scattered across the hills and forests of the Central Provinces and neighbouring states, few have adopted any profession other than that of agriculture. Today, the Gond's methods of cultivation do not greatly differ from those of his more backward neighbours, save that in many places he yokes cows with his bullocks to the plough. In the hills he has often to struggle with poor, rocky soil, where only *kodon* and *kutki* can flourish, with oilseeds like *niger*. After this land is used for three years, it has to be left fallow for an equal period to recoup its fertility. In the plains and valleys, however, the Gond has taken to the regular cultivation of wheat and other cereals. As long ago as 1867, Lawrence said of the Gonds of Bhandara that 'they make good farmers and careful tillers of the

soil'. In the last rust and frost years, large quantities of improved wheat seed were distributed on *takkavi* throughout the province. The Gonds were delighted with this, especially with the A068 wheat, and today in many places which formerly knew nothing but the local *pahari pissi* you may hear Gonds declare that they grow nothing but 'Arsath number' (A068 wheat).

But the characteristic type of Gond cultivation, which is still practised by the Maria and Muria Gonds of Bastar, is shifting cultivation. The Gonds and Baigas of the Central Provinces call this *bewar*. In Bastar the system of cutting trees or brushwood and spreading them over a field for burning is called *dahi* in Halbi and *parka* by the Maria Gonds. This system obtains, not on hill-slopes, but on more or less level ground. In Halbi the word *marhan* is applied to shifting cultivation on flat ground: this is called *dippa* by the Muria and Hill Maria Gonds, and *erka* by the Bison-horn Marias. *Penda* cultivation is practised on steep hill-sides. The material to be burnt is roughly distributed over the slope and fired. The Gonds are less passionately attached to this type of cultivation than the Baigas, and under Government pressure have abandoned it almost everywhere.

The cultural life of the Gond is expressed in song and dance, in riddle and legend. A mischievous 'Raj-Gond' movement is attempting to make the Gond despise his old culture; under its influence he adopts the sacred thread, gives away his pigs and chickens, and abandons the simple and beautiful dances of the past with their richly poetic songs. The reformers who deprive the Gond of meat food do not bother to supply him with vegetable seeds or improved cows which will give him milk and ghee; and so he becomes thin, sour, emaciated; an unspeakable drabness overspreads his life. 'They have robbed

us of our meat, our liquor and our music ; what difference is there now between us and our cattle ? '

But there are still large areas where this evil has not spread. Here the peasant goes to his work with a song on his lips and joy in his heart ; the girls sing their beautiful *dadaria* as they go to pick mangoes in the forest, to weed their fields or to bring water from the well. The old people and the children vie with one another in posing *dhandha* (riddles) by the fireside. The strength of their agricultural interests may be seen in these songs and riddles.

Wherever the creeper goes, the beans follow.—Fish in a river.

The ox is tied in its stall, but the yoke walks away.—A creeper.

A little plough wanders fearlessly through the jungle —A razor.

A ploughshare is described as ' a roasted *bami* fish that plunges into the depths ' ; a scythe is ' a cow with a crumpled horn that goes into the deepest jungle ' ; a lighted lantern is ' a houseful of husks gained from a single grain of rice '. A song written on white paper is aptly described : ' Sow black seed in a white field, cut the crop and it awakes and sings. '

The difficulties and joys of farming inform Gond poetry with a realism that keeps it very close to everyday life.

' Sometimes while you are cutting *kodon*,
The stalk slips through your hand, Ho !
The sun is but a bamboo's length above the hills,
And my heart is captured by you. '

The life of the fields is never far from romantic love.

' Let us sow *kodon* and *kutki* in one field
Then we will live together all life long. '

But its hardships are frequently emphasized.

'He is sowing seed in a hard land
Where the plough breaks and he has to make it new.
He drives the plough and scatters seed,
But there is no harvest of his toil.'

Among all the forms of village welfare that are now so eagerly discussed by politicians, none will benefit the Gond so greatly as agricultural improvement. An army of agricultural *jamadars*, inspired with a missionary spirit, sent into the remoter villages, would do incalculable good. The Gond will not adopt subsidiary village industries; he is only mildly interested in education; his villages are already far cleaner and more sanitary than those of civilized people; but he does not get enough to eat, his crops will barely pay his taxes, they will not clothe his children. No task could be nobler than to improve his harvests.

3. The Baiga Cultivator *

By Verrier Elwin

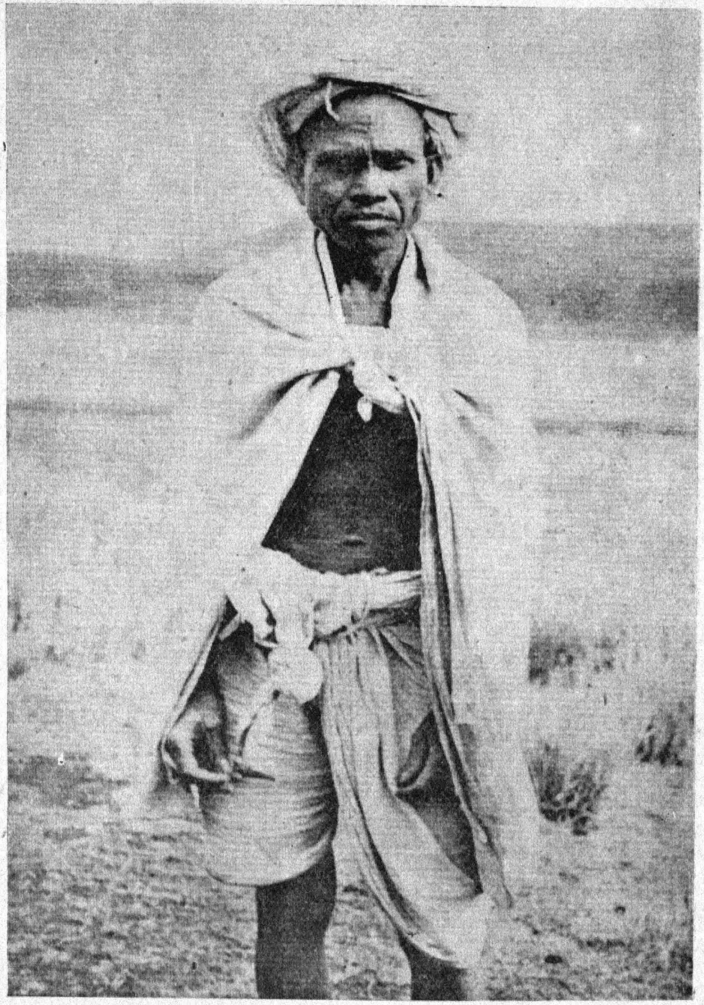
THE Baigas are a small tribe, some 40,000 strong, living in Mandla and the neighbouring districts. They are the priests and magicians of all this area. Their charms are indispensable for the recovery of the sick, the success of the hunter, the potency of the bridegroom. They know exactly what secret of fertility to breathe over the reluctant seed. They are the children of Mother Earth, and they live so close to her that she opens to them

* An account of the Gonds and Baigas will be found in Russell's *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces*. A brilliant description of agricultural ceremonies and superstitions is given by W. V. Grigson in his monumental *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*. My own volume, *The Baigas* and my novels *Phulmat of the Hills* and *A Cloud that's Dragonish* give an account of the lives of Gonds, Patharis and Baigas.

all her mysteries. The Baiga is no agriculturist, yet he has a profound influence on agriculture. He inspires the Gond and Hindu cultivator with a psychology of confidence and expectation. The peasant has far more confidence in magic than in manure.

The Baiga magicians farm out the countryside into circuits, and continually travel round pursuing their campaign against witches and evil spirits. At the *Bhidri* ceremony of the blessing of the seed at the beginning of the rains, if wild pig and deer destroy the crops, if bullocks stray and refuse to return home, if rust attacks a field, if the rains fail or are too abundant, if tigers molest the watches in the fields, then the Baiga magician hastens to the rescue. I know even Brahmin landlords who regularly employ Baigas in every agricultural emergency.

The Baigas themselves are passionately and religiously attached to *bewar*, shifting cultivation. Only the severest Government pressure has succeeded in compelling some of them to leave their axes for the plough. *Bewar* was laid upon the Baigas as a right and a duty at the beginning of the world by God Himself, Who forbade them ever to lacerate the breast of Mother Earth with the plough. This is not a mere pious fancy for the Baiga; it is the pivotal point of his religion. Those Baigas who have taken to the plough are regarded as decadent traitors to tribal tradition, their magic is weak and beggarly, they are exposed to the attacks of wild animals and the exactions of forest guards. There are still thousands of true Baigas who have never touched a plough. These live in Bilaspur, in the Pandaria Zemindari, in Kawardha and, until recently, in Rewa. A few families remain in the Baiga Chak in Mandla. But no Baiga ploughs with a clear conscience; fifty years of earnest propaganda has had no real influence on his mind.



A Gond cultivator

[PLATE 28

An old Baiga cultivator of Balaghat

The Baigas do nothing haphazard in their *bewars*. A family goes into the jungle and selects a suitable site. When they have found one, they take some rice and throw it over a tree. The head of the family fells it with a single blow of the axe. Then he takes a leaf from the tree, folds it in four, and ties it on the standing stool. This is accepted by other Baigas as evidence of occupation.

A little later, they return and cut all the grasses and brushwood. Fifteen days afterwards, they worship their axes, promising Kutki Dai or Anna Dai that if the crop is good, they will make special offerings at harvest-time. They turn the axe with the blade downwards, and recite over it a short *mantra* invoking the aid of Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin. Then they go to the *bewar*. Before felling, they offer a coconut to the jungle-dwellers, whose home they are now going to despoil, and then they proceed to fell all the trees within the area chosen, leaving stools about a foot high.

In May they go to burn the now dry wood and undergrowth. In the interval they have distributed the stuff fairly evenly over the *bewar*, but they have carefully observed the original tree that was felled. It is from this that they are to make the Virgin Fire. It is forbidden to kindle the fire with the *chakmak;* it must be made by twirling a bamboo stick in a hole made in another split bamboo. When the fire has kindled, the bamboos are broken into bits, and each member of the family takes a bit and lights it. They set fire first to the original tree, and then go all over the *bewar* firing it.

The next duty is to fence the *bewar*, which they do with logs and brushwood cut round the edges, and they put snares and traps for deer and other animals.

After the first rain has fallen they take their seed to the *bewar* and perform a variation of the *Bhidri* ceremony,

offering special gifts to Dharti Mata. The men fill the folds of their *dhoti* with seeds, all mixed up together—*kodon, kutki, marria, pania, sawar, kang, raseni-kutki, bajri, jowar*—and scatter it anywhere and everywhere in the ashes. After a few days, they return and dibble the lines for *arhar dal* across the middle of the field; they drop three seeds into each hole. Round the stools of the trees, they sow beans and cucumbers.

At harvest-time, they make a small imitation threshing-floor for Thakur Deo, and offer to him and Anna Dai the first fruits of the crop and a cock or pig, whatever they had promised at the time of felling. It is vital to implement these promises; there are many grim tales of tigers devouring those who failed to do so.

The first year, the crop is gathered rather than cut; only the tops of the plants are removed, and the stalks left for next year. The second year, they burn any trees that may be left, and all the dry stalks of the previous harvest. The third year, the crop is generally poor, for there is little left to burn.

They may, however, use the third-year *bewar* as a *dahi* clearing, and drag logs and brushwood from the surrounding forest and spread it over the field.

The Baigas usually thresh their crop without bullocks; men, women and children go round and round, laughing and singing, and thresh it with their feet.

The Baigas, honest to a fault, witty and charming, lazy, improvident, generous-hearted, are some of the most attractive people in the Central Provinces. Although wedded to an out-of-date form of cultivation, they are an important factor in the progress of agriculture in the province. Agriculture depends not only on seed and soil, monsoon and manure, but on the courage and energy of the human spirit. The Baiga by his magic, by his secret

information, by his encouragement, inspires the cultivator to his hard task and helps him to face bravely all the disasters of wind and weather.

4. The Berar Cultivator

By S. G. Mutkekar

THE country known as Berar is a comparatively small province measuring in length about 150 miles and in breadth about 144 miles. It lies approximately in the centre of peninsular India. In extent, it embraces the broad valley running east and west between two tracts of hilly country, the Gawilgarh hills on the north and the Ajanta range on the south. The former, which form a southern offshoot of the Satpuras are known as the Melghat range, while the latter is known as the Balaghat range. These two ranges, with the central valley known as the Payanghat or the Purna valley, form the three main natural divisions of Berar.

The chief cultivating castes in Berar have been the Kunbis, Malis and Baris, but at present most other castes have also taken to cultivation and agriculture does not, as in the past, remain confined only to a few communities. The bulk, however, of the cultivators in Berar are Maratha Kunbis. It will only be necessary, therefore, to describe the condition, customs and manners of the Kunbi, who is in excess of all other castes. The distinction between Marathas and Kunbis is almost entirely social. Among the aboriginal tribes that are confined to the hilly tracts, the Korkus form a majority of the cultivating class.

The Berar Kunbi is strong, energetic and hard-working. He is medium in stature, lean and sunburnt in appearance. He is generally illiterate, simple in habits and kind-hearted. His love for the land that feeds and clothes him is only

comparable in intensity to the love of a child for its mother. On its possession is founded his rank, his freedom, his power as a citizen and social importance.

Simplicity in food, dress and manners is the distinctive characteristic of the Berar cultivator. Probably it forms the essence of his life.

Jowar is his staple article of diet. The accessories to *jowar* bread are either boiled pulse (*waran*), boiled and spiced gram-flour (*besan*), ground chillies (*chatni*) or onions (*kanda*). Hence *besan bhakar*, *chatni bhakar* and *kanda bhakar* have become household terms for his meals. Wheat, rice, milk and ghee, which form a wealthy man's food, are indulged in by the ordinary cultivator only on festive occasions and are considered to be luxuries. The custom of using sweet oil on bread is very common and it is very highly relished. Vegetables are eaten whenever easily and cheaply obtained. During the rainy season, a variety of vegetation that grows wild either in the fields or on waste lands provides ample food. During the winter, a few varieties of vegetables are dried in the sun and kept for use during the rest of the year when green vegetables are scarce and costly. Fruit seldom finds a place in the diet except of the rich. Most of the cultivators are vegetarians. Among non-vegetarians fish, mutton, fowls and eggs are eaten occasionally. The women, however, generally do not take non-vegetarian food. Both men and women have the habit of chewing *pan*, betel and sometimes tobacco. When watching the *jowar* crop the cultivator is very fond of eating *hoorda* (parched raw grain of *jowar*). Quite a large number of families keep milking animals but most of the milk produced is turned into butter and ghee to be sold. Though not generally addicted to intoxicating liquors, the Kunbi likes a drink if it comes his way.

The ordinary dress of a cultivator consists of a *dhoti* (loin-cloth), a *bandi* (thick jacket), a shirt, a *pheta* (head dress), a *dupatta* (piece of long cloth which hangs over the head) and a pair of shoes. A coarse blanket serves as a protection against rain and cold. The dress of a woman consists of a *sari*, a *choli* (bodice) and a *wodhani* or *shela*. Corresponding to the blanket used by the men, the women use a *pasodi* which serves both as bedding and protection against cold.

The first thing that strikes a visitor to a village is the lack of any kind of sanitation. The houses have few windows and are built close without sufficient space between them. Further, the cattle sheds are under the same roof and manure heaps containing all sorts of household waste are close to the dwelling house. There are no drains to carry off foul water which accumulates and stagnates in pits dug close to the house.

The household furniture of an ordinary cultivator is very scanty and consists of one or two beds made of wooden frames interlaced with coir or hemp rope and wooden boxes to keep his clothes and valuables.

The cultivator does not invest his savings, if any, in banks. He will either lend the money or hold it in hidden places. Such savings as he may have are often utilized for making ornaments. The men usually wear ear- and finger-rings while the women wear nose-rings, toe-rings, bangles, armlets and necklaces. The total value of the ornaments seldom exceeds Rs. 100.

Owing to his keen moral and religious code, the Kunbi regards marriage as a sacrament rather than a mere contract. Marriage is conducted according to the rules laid down by religion and custom. All girls are married almost without exception either before or immediately after puberty. The boys are married between the ages of

fifteen and twenty. Early marriages are not so common now as in the past. The custom of widow remarriage is not common. Marriage expenses nowadays are from five to ten times what they were fifty years ago.

The women look after the domestic affairs in the house and help the men in outside work during leisure. They do all the domestic work such as milking, cooking and washing, in the morning and evening. During the day they work in the fields. Among the higher class, women confine themselves to household work. The children help their parents as soon as they are seven or eight years old.

The chief festivals of the cultivator are the *Gudipadwa* (*Chaitra*), *Akshaya Tritia* (*Vaishakha*), *Pola* (*Shrawan*), *Akharpakh* (*Bhadrapada*), *Dusehra* (*Aswin*), *Divali* (*Aswin-Kartik*) and *Shimga* (*Falgun*). The total number of days he is off work during the festivals is about ten. In addition, he spends from fifteen to twenty days a year in attending religious fairs and marriage ceremonies of relatives and in visiting friends. *Pola* is the biggest festival : cultivators decorate and worship the bullocks and march them in procession all over the village. Everyone tries to show off his bullocks to the best advantage, and if these functions are properly organized, they can help in stimulating interest in the systematic breeding, feeding and care of his cattle. The cattle have suffered much from injudicious crossing. Cows are held in reverence but are not properly fed. The people prefer buffalo's milk to cow's milk and take more care of the buffaloes. The working bullocks are properly fed and well cared for. Too few young cattle are raised in the village to maintain the supply of bullocks and the stock is continually renewed by purchase.

The Kunbi is not very particular about sending his son

A Berar cultivator

[PLATE 30

A Korku cultivator

[PLATE 31

to school. He complains that the kind of education that is given in the school does not procure a living and makes the boy unfit for the profession of his father. He says that he would rather keep the boys at home so that they should stick to farm work.

The Kunbi's conception of religion is only the observance of certain fasts, religious functions and festivals, the giving of charity and offering of prayers. A few of them go on pilgrimages and most of them attend fairs which are generally held in honour of some saint or deity. *Bhajans* (prayers) and *saptahas* (reading stories from religious books) are common at night in many villages.

The Kunbi very seldom indulges in outdoor games. As a matter of fact, an industrious cultivator gets very little time for such recreation. However, on days when work is prohibited, he takes part in village entertainments, such as wrestling matches and *dandhars* (village dramas). He is very fond of *chakra* races which were common in the past. Good race bullocks are now scarce but even when available, the cultivators have no money to buy them. Well-to-do cultivators attend the theatre or cinema when they visit urban areas. The most common indoor amusements are card-playing and singing of ballads.

The Berar cultivator lacks miserably in discipline. Definite planning of work is never done. Purchases of seeds and other agricultural requisites are delayed till the last moment when he often finds that all the seed has been sold or that the price has gone up. The hard struggle for existence and the uncertainties of the seasons have made him a fatalist. It is usual for the cultivator to overstep the limits of his resources and to contract debts on special occasions. He shows no hesitation in resorting to litigation even for the most trifling causes. Huge sums of money are spent and many families which were

once considered rich have been ruined in this way. The worst habit of the Berar cultivator is his tendency to borrow without any consideration of his ability to repay. During the years of high prices, he was comparatively rich and prosperous. Instead of paying off his debts, he squandered his easily earned gains on marriages, social functions, entertainments and other extravagances, and as his credit was very good and money was easily raised, he incurred fresh debts. Thinking that the boom had come to stay, he purchased high-priced land mostly with borrowed money, hoping to make it up from cultivation. With unfavourable seasons and short crops combined with the fall in prices, he finds himself in difficulties. Being illiterate, he is very easily duped by his creditors. He is fond of display and will spend beyond his means to show his importance. He is a man of independent spirit and will never tolerate insult or dishonour.

From what has been said about the Berar cultivator, it is evident that all is not well with him. There are signs, however, indicating that he is now in a changing phase. His modes, manners and standard of living are undergoing a rapid change. Education is giving him a wider outlook and his spendthrift habits are slowly disappearing. He has begun to take an interest in his cultivation and is making serious efforts to bring into actual practice the recommendations of the Agricultural Department.

5. The Korku Cultivator

By S. G. Mutkekar

THE study of the Berar cultivator will not be complete without the study of the type living in the hilly tracts of the country known as the Melghat, the

northern boundary of Berar. The Melghat forms the southern offshoot of the Satpura mountains and is inhabited mostly by the aboriginal tribes such as the Korkus, Gonds, Bhils and Nihals of whom the Korkus form the predominating cultivating class.

The Korkus represent a Kolarinan tribe of the most primitive aboriginals and, besides their home in Melghat, they are found scattered also in the hills and forests of the Central Provinces. The word Korku means simply 'men or tribesmen', 'Koru' being their term for a man and 'ku' the plural termination. According to their own traditions, the Korkus, like so many other early tribes, were born from the soil. They have a peculiar language of their own.

The average Korku is a medium-sized figure, dark in colour and rugged in features. He has a round face, a rather wide nose, thick lips, prominent cheek-bones, a scanty moustache, and his head is shaved after the Hindu fashion. He is very hardy though not as strong and stout as his brother cultivator in the plains. Malaria and other diseases, combined with defective nutrition, reduce his efficiency. His life is a hard struggle with natural forces such as storms, heavy rains and frosts to which the hilly tracts are generally subject. He is a born hunter, hardy and active in the chase and exceedingly bold and courageous. His skill and dexterity in the use of the axe in hunting is extraordinary. He uses the axe as a throwing weapon and thus brings down small deer, hare and peacock. He catches fish by damming streams in the hot weather and throwing into the pool thus formed some vegetable fish poison.

In character, he is simple, honest and truthful, but is very irresponsible as regards his promises. He is

extremely shy of strangers and inclined to fly at their approach. However, when he once gets over the feeling of shyness, he is exceedingly frank and communicative. He has the reputation of being very respectful to Government officials.

The women are often more pleasing, the ruggedness of the features being less noticeable on account of their extreme good nature and happy, carefree demeanour.

The dress of the Korku is of the most simple description. He clothes himself in a short, knee-length *dhoti*. He wears a small head-cloth and at times a short white *bundi* or coat to cover his body. The Korku woman, as a rule, wears only a white or red *sari* and a bodice. Generally the clothes are worn all day and night without ever being washed because of their idea that the clothes wear out quickly if washed frequently. They are usually without a blanket or warm clothing and in the cold season they sleep around a wood fire kept burning or smouldering all night. In short, they are reconciled to life with meagre comforts and in a squalid environment.

The Korku cultivator is fond of wearing ornaments and puts rings in his ears and fingers, bracelets on his wrists and bands round his waist. The desire for ornament is equally strong in the Korku woman. Necklaces of beads are worn round the neck, while the arms and legs are weighed down with brass and iron and there is hardly a part of her body that she does not adorn. She gets herself profusely tattooed with representations of flowers, scorpions and other objects.

A Korku village is a pleasant sight. A small hut six or seven feet high at the ridge, made of split bamboos and mud with a verandah in the front and thatched with leaves and grass from the jungles, forms the Korku's abode. The huts are built in straight rows facing one

another, with a wide lane between. Six or seven huts partitioned by bamboo mats form a connected row under the common roof. No nails are required as the posts are bound firmly together with bamboo or creeper fibre. The huts are kept so remarkably clean that they present quite a contrast to the personal want of cleanliness of the occupants. Besides a verandah in the front, each hut has a cattle-shed at the side and a fenced enclosure behind, called the *badhi*, where maize, chillies, *rajgira* and tobacco are grown.

The Korku has hardly any furniture worth the name save a few rupees' worth of household articles and cooking utensils. The furniture includes a wooden stand for his water pots and a bamboo *charpai* which makes a good bed. There is an ever-burning hearth in the corner of his hut which is his source of warmth in the winter and is the only means of light during the night.

Nature has provided him with certain foodstuffs which are not generally found in the plains of Berar. His common food is a gruel of rice or small millets boiled in water. Bread of *jowar* and *masur* pulse are also occasionally used. This is about the cheapest kind of food on which a man can live and the quantity of grain taken in the form of this gruel (*pej*) which will suffice for a Korku's subsistence is astonishingly small. He rarely eats vegetables, and his food varies according to the cropping and the season. He grows the small millets such as *kodon*, *kutki* and *sawa* for his subsistence, selling the more valuable crops for rent and expenses. The flowers of the *mahua* tree (*Bassia latifolia*) are also a staple article of diet, being largely eaten as well as made into liquor, and the Korku knows of many other roots and fruits of the forest.

He eats meat and is particularly partial to fish. He will

angle patiently for hours, however urgent other calls on his time may be. He smokes the fish for days over the hearth, and this provides him with a luxurious dish.

Illiterate, without discipline or training, with little ambition and much indolence, the Korku lives a contented life. His mode of living is so simple that he does not need anything more than the bare necessities of life. He likes to have plenty of leisure and an easy time. Unless driven, he is constitutionally averse to labour and cares nothing about provision for the future. During the hot weather, he goes about in parties and pays visits to his relatives, staying with them several days, and the time is spent simply in eating, drinking and making merry. He is always in debt and for every little requirement he goes to the moneylender who lends in this area at exorbitant rates of interest. The prevalence of the drinking habit among the Korkus, their refusal to work unless need drives them, their want of self-respect and their thriftlessness are the real obstacles in the way of their social and economic advancement.

The Korku considers himself a Hindu and claims to have a better place in the social structure of Hinduism than most of the other forest tribes because he worships most of the Hindu deities and observes many of the Hindu festivals. He has, however, in addition, his own religion which is devoid of any formulas. The worship of the Kórku may be summarized as that of the gods presiding over the village destinies, the crops, epidemic diseases and the spirits of his forefathers. The village gods consist of stones or mud platforms placed at a convenient distance from the village under the shade of some appropriate tree and often having a red or white flag made of a piece of cloth tied to the end of a pole to indicate their position. The three most importtnt village deities are Dongar

Gomaj, the god of the hills, Hardoli Gomaj, the cholera god and Mata Gomaj, the goddess of small-pox. The village priest does *puja* to the deities with offerings of coconuts, limes, dates, vermilion and a goat or fowl. The village gods are believed to regulate the happenings of a Korku's daily life and are therefore propitiated with great fervour.

The Korku is very superstitious and is a great believer in omens. He has little faith in medicines and in cases of sickness requisitions the aid of the village sorcerer, called Parikar or Devadhami, who ascertains which deity is displeased with him. The offended god is then summoned and enters into the body of one of the persons present and explains why he is offended with the sick person. Atonement is then promised and the customary offerings of goats, fowls, coconuts and liquor are made. The Korku has a wide knowledge of the medicinal properties of jungle roots and herbs and is often successful in effecting cures when the regular native doctors have failed.

It will be a mistake to suppose that the Korku is less inclined to merry-making than his civilized brother. In fact, he is a curious mixture of the eastern and the western philosophy of life. Nothing will prevent a Korku from dancing if he is so inclined. The festivals he celebrates are *Diwali, Dusehra, Pola, Panchami, Shivratri* and *Fag*, the last being the one he enjoys most. He is at his best on festival days. He decorates his head-dress and ears with flowers and dances with his womenfolk to the music of the pipe and drum. He drinks to his heart's content at such functions and makes merry in every possible way. The Korku dance is a thing to be appreciated. The men and women dance together in perfect harmony. The songs they sing on these occasions are very emotional and exciting.

The Korku is very fond of visiting the weekly markets, in company with his wife, even if he has no purchases to make. He generally brings fruits, roots, honey, horns of animals and other jungle products which he has collected for sale and with the sum obtained he makes his weekly purchases of tobacco, salt, chillies, oil and other sundries, and in addition as much rice and *gul* as he can afford, leaving a trifle to be expended at the liquor shop before departing for home.

Marriage is generally adult. It is still considered a religious function and is performed by the village priest or *bhumak* who is a Korku. He is paid two to three rupees for his services. Matches are arranged generally by the parents and a bride-price, which amounts to a fairly substantial sum in comparison with the means of the parties, is usually paid. The expenses of a wedding vary from five to twenty rupees for the bride's family and from ten to fifty rupees for the bridegroom's according to their means.

The practice of *lamjana* or service for a wife is commonly adopted by boys who cannot afford to buy one. The bridegroom serves the prospective father-in-law for an agreed period, usually three to five years, and at its expiry he is married to the girl without expense. During this term he is not supposed to have any access to the girl, but frequently they become intimate; if this happens the boy may either stay and serve his unexpired term or take his wife away at once; in the latter case his parents should pay the girl's father five rupees for each year of the bridegroom's unexpired service.

Polygamy and remarriage of widows are permitted. The few Korkus who can afford the expense take a number of wives. To have several wives is a sign of wealth and dignity. They are also useful for cultivation as they work better than hired servants.

The tribe has a splendid caste discipline and their quarrels are settled expeditiously by their panchayats or committees without reference to courts of law. The punishments inflicted by the panchayats consist of feasts or small fines in money, which are generally spent in liquor. The use of liquor is so common that it is still regarded as a necessity during marriages and other tribal ceremonies.

The Korkus are engaged mainly in agriculture and quite a number of them are farm servants and labourers. In former times, they practised only shifting cultivation, burning down patches of jungle and sowing seed, after the breaking of the rains, on the ground fertilized by the ashes. They were thus required constantly to change their plantation. This has since been forbidden by the Forest Department, and as the idea of private property inland has developed they are now adopting settled habits.

When the Melghat, with the rest of Berar, came under the British administration in 1853, the entire tract was under the management of the Revenue Department. The land revenue system then existing left the aboriginals without any protection against land-grabbers. Land was being sold, mortgaged, and sublet to a great extent and a considerable area was being taken by outside speculators. To put a stop to this evil and to afford protection to the aboriginals, restricted tenure has been introduced and land cannot now pass from the hands of the aboriginal so easily as in the past. In order solely to afford a permanent supply of suitable local labour required for forest work like cutting and carting timber, some of the villages have been designed as forest villages and these are entirely under the management of the Forest Department.

The soils of the Melghat present the usual variations found on trap, the higher hill tops and plateaux consisting of the reddish brown loam known as *murum*, between which and black cotton soil all gradations of soil are found. The area of good soil in the hands of the aboriginals is comparatively small, the average size of the holding not exceeding ten acres. The Korku often prefers light soil to heavy, because it is easier to work and is cropped more quickly. He refuses to manure his fields because this involves the additional labour of weeding. As a cultivator, therefore, he is inferior and gives little attention to his crops because of the facilities he enjoys for making a livelihood by forest labour and cart-hiring. His methods and materials of cultivation are also very crude and primitive. He grows cotton, rice, millets, wheat and pulses. His implements are of the old type and consist of a plough, *bakhar* and hoe. He does not follow any systematic crop rotation and seldom saves his own seed for sowing. He begins his cultivation very late in the summer. The women and children are also made to work in the field. To protect his crops from the beasts of the jungle, he has to keep a constant watch, particularly during the night. If he has a well in his field, he grows irrigated crops, such as tomatoes, garlic, carrots, chillies, brinjals, peas and the like. He generally sells his farm produce in small lots at a very cheap rate whenever he needs money. He has absolutely no idea of marketing and allows himself to be cheated at every step in the market.

Among people of this description, it must be realized how difficult it is to apply measures of rural improvement. However, Government has been trying to improve their lot through the agency of its nation-building departments. The Agricultural Department has opened three demonstration plots and two seed depots in the tract and

arrangements have been made for the supply of pure seed and improved agricultural implements. *Taccavi* loans are advanced on a liberal scale to enable them to purchase their agricultural requirements. Schools have been opened to serve the villages and it is hoped that all these efforts of the Government will bear fruit in making the Korku a more intelligent and provident cultivator.

VIII

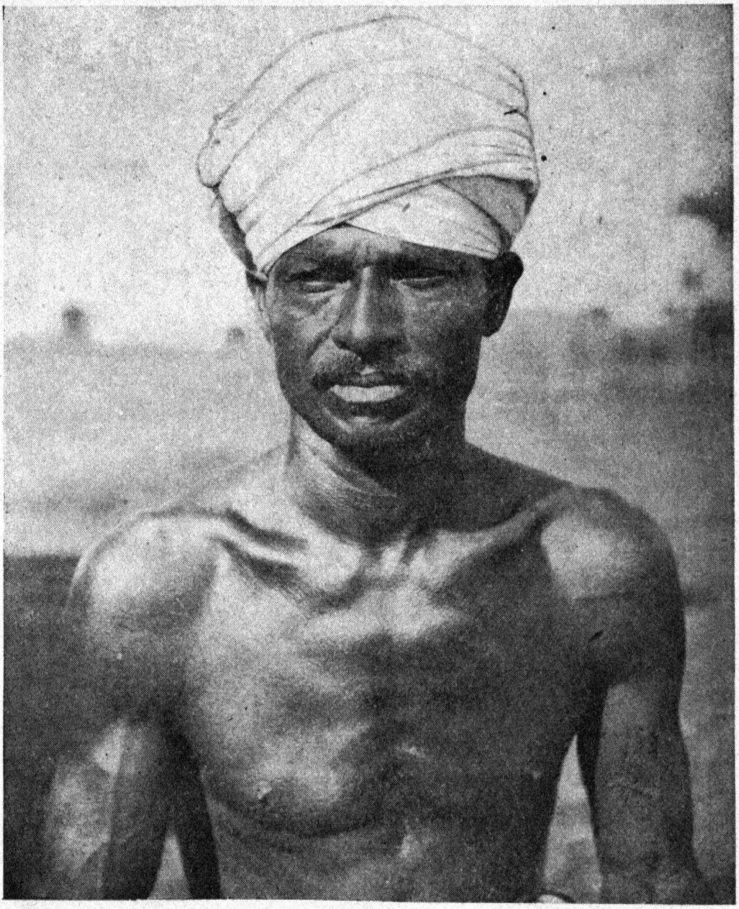
THE ASSAM CULTIVATOR

By J. N. Chakravarty

THE province of Assam consists of three distinct tracts: (1) the Brahmaputra Valley consisting of six districts (which may be called Assam proper), (2) the Surma Valley consisting of the two districts of Sylhet and Cachar, and (3) the Hills. The type of cultivator in each is entirely distinct. There is, however, little to distinguish the cultivator of the Surma Valley from his prototype in Eastern Bengal. The population is predominantly Muslim and the climate and the physical conditions are very similar to those of the neighbouring province of Bengal. In the Brahmaputra Valley, the population is of mixed origin, with a sprinkling of Mongoloid extraction and mainly Hindu. This is, however, being changed by constant immigration of Muslim cultivators from the district of Mymensingh. The Hills again have their own distinctive types. Each hill is slightly different from the other, but the Khasi cultivator is the most energetic and intelligent.

The Assam Cultivator

In spite of the economic depression and rapidly changing world conditions, the Assamese cultivator still continues a true son of nature depending entirely on mother earth for his subsistence. He is straightforward and simple and can see only what lies immediately before him. He is unwilling to make what he considers unnecessary exertions and does not see the necessity of providing against the rainy day. He likes to have plenty of leisure and an easy time and does not worry himself beyond his immediate needs. The damp climate of Assam has



An Assamese cultivator

[PLATE 32

An Assamese cultivator and his family harvesting paddy

perhaps partly helped in shaping his character. Paddy, which perhaps requires the least exertion to grow, is his main crop. He is, however, extremely busy and quite hard-worked during the months of June, July and August, which form the main paddy-growing season, and again during the harvesting months of December and January. Except during these months he rarely works in the afternoon. Women play an important part in the life of the Assamese cultivators not only for household management but also for such active operations as transplanting paddy seedlings, harvesting, threshing and fishing. The women are expert in weaving, ignorance of which is considered very derogatory for an Assamese woman. Until recently all the cloth required for the household was woven at home by the womenfolk, and it is only during the last two years that mill-made cloth is finding its way into the interior of Assam.

An Assamese cultivator and his wife usually cultivate about five acres of paddy, and this is often supplemented by vegetables, mustard and a small patch of sugarcane. Any cash that he requires for paying land revenue and for purchasing such requirements as salt, cloth, etc. is found by selling a part of the paddy and perhaps *gur*. He has not yet been accustomed to grow any crops requiring strenuous cultivation and attention. Irrigation is almost unknown. Fruit trees such as plantains and papayas always form a part of the homestead. He lives in small thatched huts supported by bamboo posts (a few clumps of which are grown in the homestead) with mud floors. He is usually quite clean and a daily bath is a routine. He is very fond of chewing *pan* and betel and always grows a few areca palms supporting betel vines. His food is very simple, consisting of rice, curry and small fish with some green vegetables; but a cup of tea in the morning

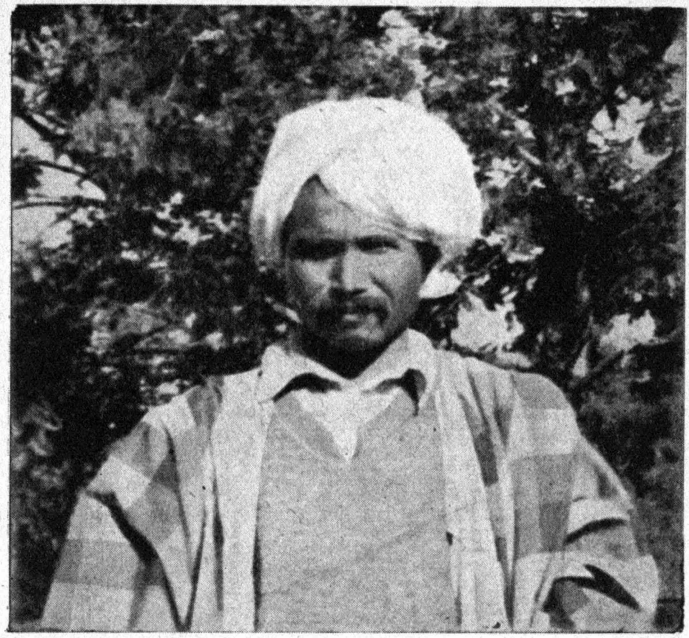
and afternoon is a necessity. He is not fond of spices, but curd is highly relished although not always available. The cattle of the country are very poor, an average cow giving about ½ lb. of milk per day.

His vices as well as pleasures are very simple. His usual enjoyment is some community singing in the evening accompanied by drums. Some castes are very fond of *loupani* (home-brewed wine), but they rarely get drunk. The great annual festival is the *Bihu* which comes some time in March and marks the end of the harvesting season. This is marked by plenty of eating, drinking, singing and merry-making for days and nights together, the young men and girls taking active part.

The Khasi Cultivator

The Khasi race inhabits the middle portion of the Assam range of hills. They are of Mongolian extraction and their system of inheritance is matriarchal. Consequently the womenfolk occupy an important position in social life, which is reflected in their freedom and equality with men. The women take part in all manual labour and very often work even harder than the men. The Khasis are very democratic and manual labour is not looked down upon. The son of a Government officer will be found to work as an ordinary carpenter and *vice versa*.

They are medium in stature and individuals vary little from the general type. A good sense of whimsical humour is evident in their intercourse. Their country becomes alive to them in their stories and traditions. Streams run races, rocks fight one another, and places are named after momentous events which occurred in olden times. Upright stone monoliths, some of great size, commemorate the dead. Inclined to be a gambler, but a cheerful loser, the Khasi likes his drink, his smoke, and



A Khasi cultivator

[PLATE 34

his *pan*. Village meets village in archery competitions twenty or more a side, shooting at a remarkably small target.

As an agriculturist the Khasi is a skilled fruit and vegetable grower, but the scale of agriculture is small. The hoe is used, the bullock plough being seen only in rice-growing areas, in the valleys. His money crop is the potato, in the growing of which he is very knowledgeable, having evolved a method of obtaining a subsidiary winter crop. Harvesting his crop in July-August, he plants specially sprouted seed again in September, mainly with the object of obtaining freshly harvested winter seed for the next spring. For his annual crop, potatoes, millets, soya beans, and roots he uses the *jhum** method of the hill tribes. Next to the potato crop of the higher plateau, come the oranges and *pan* of the southern slopes. For fruits and vegetables he has his patches of garden land. The southern slopes of the Cherrapunjee Hills are, however, famous for the Khasi oranges which are grown on a field-scale.

* The surface is scraped and divided into beds and covered with dry branches and twigs, which are burnt. This minimizes after-cultivation, but is a very wasteful practice as a *jhumed* land has to be left fallow for several years.

IX

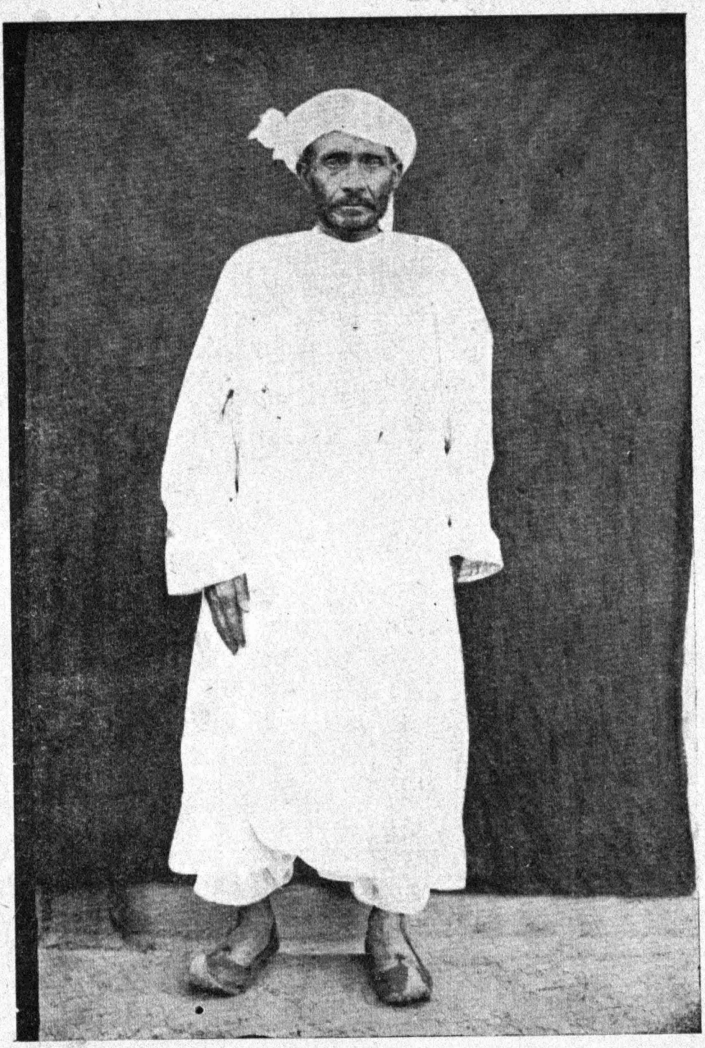
THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE CULTIVATOR

By Muhammad Aslam Khan

THE North-West Frontier Province is comprised of six districts occupied by different tribes. The Province was till recently open to outsiders who could find land for cultivation.

Between two of the tribes, i.e. the Yusafzais and Mohmands, there is much closer agreement in respect of common historical origin, language and physical characteristics than there is between the other tribes. It seems highly probable that the Mohmands and Yusafzais jointly emigrated to their present settlement from the interior of Afghanistan, or it may be that the movements of the two tribes took place simultaneously from different places.

The Yusafzai cultivator of Mardan district owns small holdings and supplements his income by other business. He has developed a keen business instinct and spends his spare time in the purchase and sale of livestock. The irrigation in this area is by canals and also by old indigenous wells whose peculiar shaded type adds charm to the countryside. The chief crops grown are tobacco and maize, the former being cultivated with a very high degree of efficiency. Some wells are specially associated with the production of snuff tobacco. Sheep and goat manures are said to improve the colour and the flavour of the leaf. These manures are applied at the rate of 300 donkey loads per acre. What is known as *swabi* white maize is sown between July and August and



A Yusafzai cultivator

[PLATE 35

An Afridi cultivator

[PLATE 36

harvested in the first half of November. The rotation followed is generally tobacco-maize. During winter, the majority of cultivators eat maize bread, very much relished by them.

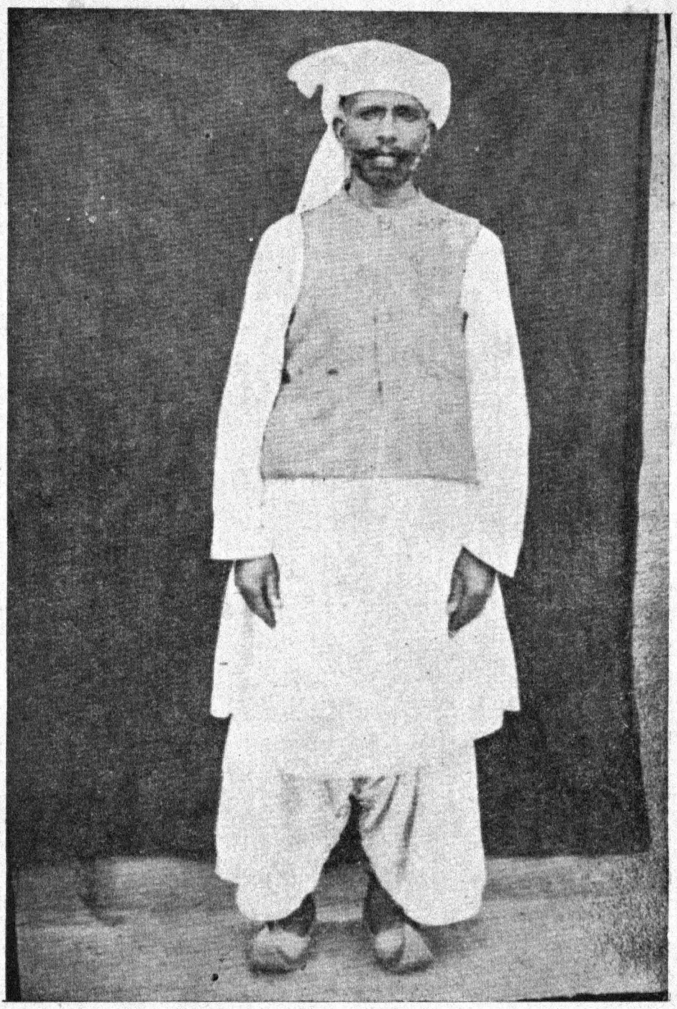
The Yusafzai cultivator is very hard-working and practises intensive farming, as a result of which, unlike the Peshawari cultivator, he is able to make his living from his small holding. He is well built and possesses excellent physique and is capable of withstanding adverse conditions.

The Afridis differ from the other tribes of the borders of the Peshawar district, by being migratory in character. During the hot weather they retire to the higher regions of the Sufed Koh mountains known as the Maidan and the Rajgal valley, but during winter they come down to the plains of Khajuri and Aka Khel which extend from Jamrud to the Kohat Pass along the border of the Peshawar district. Here they live in tents and temporary huts like nomads. They cultivate the available land and live for the most part on the produce of their flocks and herds. They also sell articles like wood, charcoal and grass in the Peshawar market and carry on a trade in mats and ropes which they make from the leaves of the dwarf palm. A few also find employment with the Peshawar Khans. The Afridi cultivators are divided into several sections, i.e. Kuki Khel, Qambar Khel, Malik Din Khel, Sipah Kamarai, Zakka Khel, Aka Khel, and Adam Khel. Aka Khels carry on an extensive trade in wood and grass in Peshawar.

Afridis are also good mechanics and a large number of them ply buses and lorries in the province. As a general rule, the youngsters take to motor-driving and such pursuits, while the elders attend to farming. The women generally help them in all farming operations except in

ploughing and sowing. The Afridi cultivator is strict in his religious observances. He is hard-working and adapts himself to changed conditions. He knows the fundamental principles of thrift and is always economical in his investments. He is a good shot and is very fond of his rifle which he slings on his shoulder at all times even when he is ploughing. He spends a good portion of his income on the upkeep of his rifle. Marriage among Afridi cultivators is a costly affair, but early marriages are practically unknown.

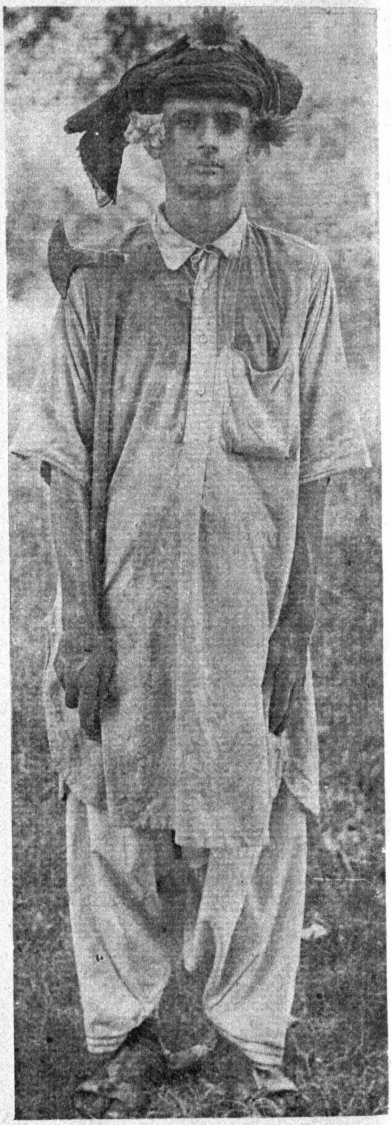
The Peshawari cultivator is generally a resident of the Peshawar valley. By his hard labour he has been instrumental in changing the arid regions of Hushtnagar into fertile corn fields watered by the Government canals which run through that tract. The western part of the valley is particularly attractive, with villages often half hidden amid groves of sheltering trees by the side of streams and rivers. Sugarcane, maize, barley and wheat are the principal crops. The Peshawari cultivator possesses fairly large holdings and gets a fair return from his crops. The women rarely assist in farming operations. He has good taste in clothes. He makes a good deal of money but is inclined to extravagance and hence gets into debt. He is fond of *shikar* on which he spends his leisure hours. It is commonly the jackals and hares that are hunted in the plains, the latter often with the help of greyhounds in the Jallozai and Tangi Mairs, where such sport is indulged in every week during the cold weather. The cultivators do not generally stir outside their houses at night on account of long-standing enmities among themselves. The watering of crops at night is, therefore, not done. On marriages, which are costly, debts are often incurred and on account of the high rate of interest the cultivator is unable to pay back his debts. The



A Peshawari cultivator

[PLATE 37

A Banuchi cultivator



A Marwat cultivator

Peshawari cultivator is noted for his hospitable nature. He is very fond of tea.

Rice, sugarcane and chillies are the main crops raised by the Peshawari cultivator. Fruit cultivation is also important. Many of the trees have been obtained from abroad, e.g. peaches from California, plums from Japan and pears from France. Sugarcane (the Paundah variety) forms an important crop and the valley is noted for its cultivation. It is manufactured chiefly into *gur*. This type is now being replaced by Coimbatore varieties distributed by the Department of Agriculture.

The Banuchi cultivator, unlike the others, prepares his seed-beds by manual labour instead of by the plough. The implement used is a kind of spade called *kurza* and in Pushto *yum* or *em*. It consists of a heart-shaped spade, which is hollowed in the front, fixed on to a long handle of the height of a man. A cross bar is fixed to the handle at a height of about a foot or a foot and a half from the spade. The use of the implement requires hard labour and ordinarily an area of one *kanal* ($\frac{1}{8}$ acre) in a day of eight hours can be prepared by its use.

Sugarcane and maize are the chief crops raised by the Banuchi cultivator. His method of sugarcane cultivation is different in that the seed is sown broadcast and the crop is never earthed up. The women rarely take part in agricultural operations.

This cultivator is somewhat quarrelsome, fond of litigation and extravagant. He is very fond of snuff. He greatly likes public fairs and picnics.

The Marwat cultivator is simple and straightforward. He is slow and easygoing and not inclined to trouble too much about cleanliness.

Ploughing, sowing and harrowing are all done together with the help of a plough with a hollow tube (*nali*) fixed

into its shaft through which the seed drops : the loose sandy soil covers the seed from behind. From the time of ploughing to the time when the crop is ready for harvest, the cultivator never visits his field. The same spirit attends the operation of harvesting in which he only removes the ears and leaves the stalks to rot in the field. The women generally assist in all agricultural operations except in ploughing and sowing. They are robust, sturdy and hard-working. The cultivator supplements his earnings by raising sheep and goats. He is fond of a local game known as *tod* and dancing. Every Marwat cultivator knows local dancing and takes pleasure in such functions irrespective of age. On *Id* days competitions in shooting and tent-pegging are commonly arranged.

X

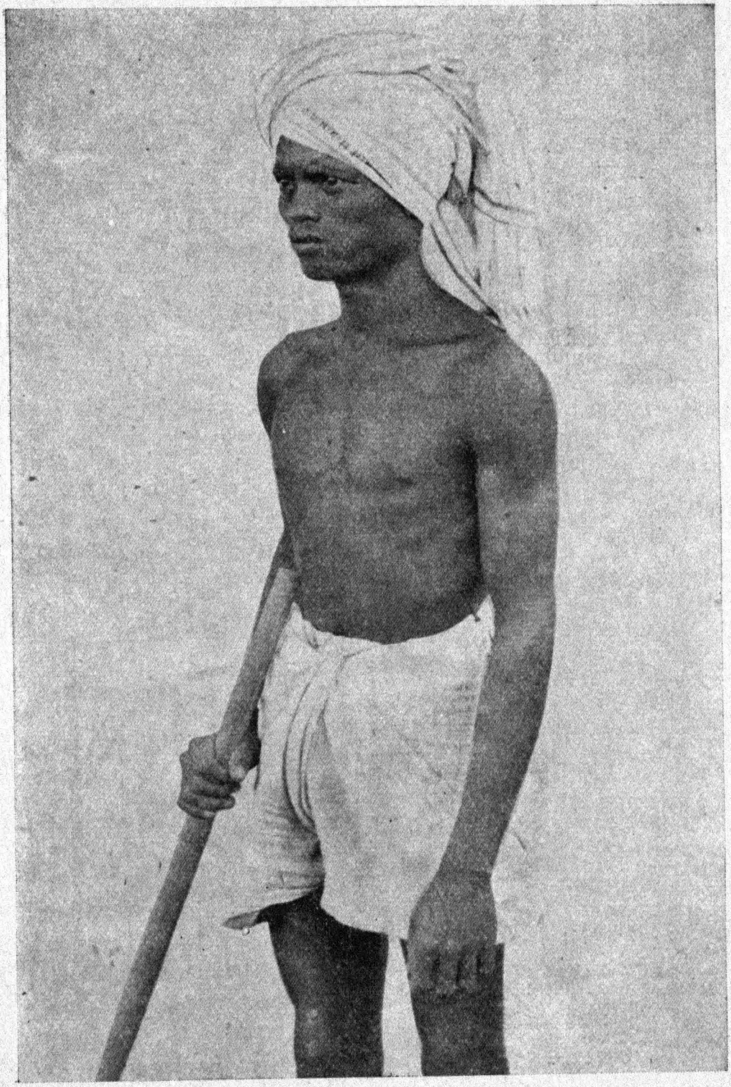
THE ORIYA CULTIVATOR

By H. L. Datta

THE physical aspect of Orissa varies from the hilly and forest-clad tracts in the interior, having conditions more or less similar to those prevailing in the Chota-Nagpur Division of Bihar, to the flat alluvial tract along the coast cut up by several large rivers and their innumerable branches which form a network of waterways and finally find their outlets into the Bay of Bengal. The hilly and backward tracts of the country in the interior are still the homes of aboriginal peoples like the Khonds and Sawars who are yet in an early stage of development, with primitive methods of agriculture, the forked branch of a tree being in many places their only agricultural implement. Compared with them, the peoples of the coastal plains are advanced, with a highly-developed civilization and culture, several centuries old, behind them.

The tiller of the soil in the coastal districts is generally regarded as the typical Oriya cultivator. The incidence of malaria and other diseases and defective nutrition makes him by no means strong, but he has a fair intelligence, the heritage of his old civilization and culture. He is sometimes maligned for lazy habits and lack of enterprise, but his life is a long struggle with natural forces such as storms, floods and drought, to which his province is specially subject on account of the geographical position. This is not conducive to the development of a desire for fuller living. The same man, in more congenial surroundings, is a different being, with industrious and active habits, comparing favourably with his brothers of the neighbouring provinces.

His habits are simple and his requirements are but few. Two *dhoties* and two *gamchas* (a piece of cloth used both as towel and as a covering for the upper part of the body), of local manufacture, are all that an average Oriya cultivator requires by way of dress for the whole year. His main meal consists of cooked rice in the evening, served hot after his day's work, with what little vegetables his womenfolk may gather from the little garden in his backyard. The unconsumed portion of the rice is carefully left over soaked in water (known as *pakhala*) and this he eats in the morning before he goes out for his day's work. With this if he has his favourite dried fish (*sukhua*) occasionally, he is supremely happy. He must, however, have his *pan* (betel leaf) with *gunda* (tobacco) at any cost. Such frugal fare does not cost an average family of five members, including children, more than Rs. 5 to 8 per month. The small cultivator generally supplements his ordinary means of livelihood by working as a day-labourer on his neighbour's land, for which he is generally paid in kind. His savings in the best of years are but slender as rice is practically his only crop, which leaves very little margin of profit in days of depression. His uncertain crop and slender savings bring him to the door of the moneylender. The part clearance of his debt, in a year of good harvest, leaves him but little balance to store against, and carry him through, the days of need that may follow his next harvest. He is kind by nature, good-humoured and religious-minded, and if the brotherhood of man is evident anywhere in India, in these days, it is in Orissa. Every village used to have its *Bhagabat ghar*, a sort of common-room where sacred religious books are kept and read out at night by the elders to the villagers, maintained by contributions from the village But now, for various reasons, these are gradually falling into disuse.



An Oriya cultivator

An Oriya cultivator at work

[PLATE 40

An average Oriya cultivator, having a family of about five, including children, and owning about two to three acres of land, has a pair of bullocks, which he hires out or lends to his neighbour, when not required for his own land, and for which he receives in payment the services of his neighbour's bullocks when he needs them. He does not consider it necessary to make any provision for his livestock which have to eke out their existence as best as they can, by grazing on the over-grazed *ails* or fallow lands in the village, for which reason the cattle population of Orissa is proverbially poor. The dung is generally used for fuel, especially in the flooded tracts, where there is great dearth of firewood, and hardly one-fourth of the total quantity goes back to the land. Village sweepings, ashes, etc., dumped in heaps (*khata*), are generally used as manure, but the quantity is so small that a plot of land has to wait its turn to receive them. The flood that visits his land periodically or regularly (as in the habitually flooded areas) is to him a blessing in disguise in so far as the land is concerned, as it brings down with it enormous quantities of silt from the upper reaches of the rivers and spreads it on the soil, adding to its fertility.

An Oriya cultivator must sow his rice at any cost, though he knows that his crop is uncertain. Left to his own resources and without any guide from outside to lead him on the way of material improvement, he remains where he is on account of his lack of initiative and enterprise; but it must be said to his credit that, by virtue of his simple and trusting nature, he is quick in response to the efforts made by his well-wishers for his economic betterment. The Department of Agriculture has stepped in as his sympathetic adviser and guide and by its activities for the introduction of improved crops

manures and methods among them, by demonstrating them free on their lands, has been his friend in need. It is gratifying to note that his response to this help has been remarkable. A flood-resisting variety of sugarcane, for instance, was introduced a few years back into a habitually flooded tract where sugarcane had never been known before, for the partial replacement of the uncertain paddy crop. Its success as a remunerative crop suitable for the flooded tracts at once appealed to the ryots and within a few years it established itself as a common crop along the coastal belt of Orissa. Similarly, the Oriya cultivator has almost completely discarded his old *desi* varieties of sugarcane and adopted the Coimbatore variety No. 213, of which the present acreage is about three times as much as the total cane area ten years back. He is gradually taking up the varieties of improved rice found suitable for the country in preference to his old low-yielding varieties. The area under the improved rices has gone up to 18,061 acres in a few years. The most remarkable progress has been made in growing vegetables. About fifteen years ago every bit of green vegetable consumed in Orissa used to be imported from outside. But now, as a result of the free demonstrations made by the Department, the Oriya cultivator is so convinced of the suitability of vegetables to his land and climatic conditions and their economic value that vegetable growing has become popular even in the interior of the country and Orissa may now be said to be fairly independent of outside supply.

XI

THE SIND CULTIVATOR

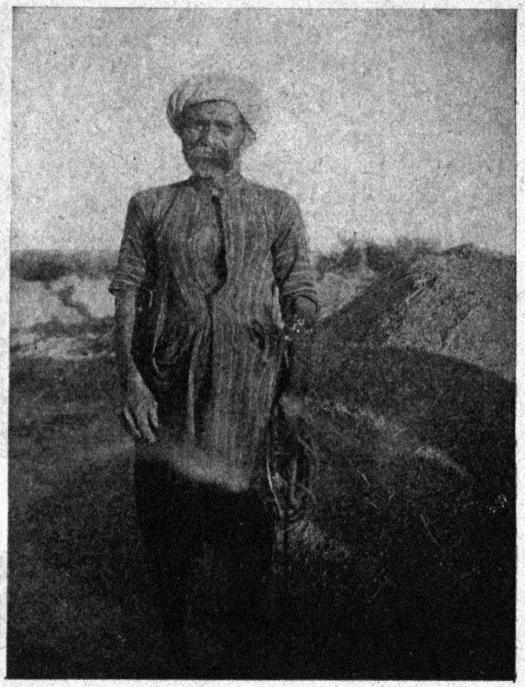
By W. J. Jenkins

THE Sindhi *hari* or cultivator is essentially the 'backbone' of Sind and, to all who have worked with and among his communities, a man worthy of admiration and respect. On account of the constant stream of immigrants into Sind from the north, the inroads of Cutchis and Marwaris from the east, and the contact with Arab invaders from the west, the rural population of Sind is a mixture of races in which Baluchis, Brohis, Marwaris, Cutchis, Pathans and Arabs predominate. In the north, the average *hari* is tall, robust and well-built, with a broad, intelligent face, large dark eyes and a wheat-coloured complexion. Many of them wear beards and permit their hair to grow long and, in general, are impressive and striking types of mankind. In Middle Sind, the physical appearance of the *hari* is not so striking, and in South Sind this deterioration in size and impressiveness is still more marked. Similarly, as physical size decreases from north to south of the province, energy and activity also decline and the southern peoples are in general more indolent and ease-loving. However, the *haris* of Sind, taken as a whole, compare very favourably in physical characteristics and in manliness with their brothers in other parts of India. In general, the Sind *hari* is trustworthy, dependable and honest. Fond of his home and family, he works hard to support them and he is chivalrous and kind towards his womenfolk. His hospitality is proverbial and, in many cases, this trait in his character is responsible in a large degree for his pecuniary difficulties. He is intensely religious, and the *pirs* or priests with which Sind abounds exercise an enormous

influence over their followers in the cultivating communities. The *hari* is not as a rule superstitious but holds certain beliefs which retard his progress and which are most difficult to eradicate. For instance, it is still widely believed that the sprinkling of sand, over which the *pir* has read some incantation, over a crop will drive away white ants and that an amulet obtained from the same religious mentor will prevent the onset of disease or cure the physical illness of its wearer.

As an agriculturist, the Sindhi *hari* is hard-working and does not spare himself in the cultivation of his holding. However, he is almost invariably a tenant-at-will of some zemindar or landowner, whose lands he cultivates on the *batai* or share system. This system of land tenure leads to lack of interest in permanent improvement of the fields and to lethargic and fatalistic outlook in the face of difficulties and crop failures. It may be said that, in Sind as in other parts of the world, a good landlord makes good tenants and few landowners could have more useful and valuable tenants, if treated properly and fairly, than the zemindars of Sind. The Sindhi *hari* is no more conservative than farmers all the world over, and he is intelligent and quick to take up improvements if it can be proved to him that they will be of advantage to him in his cultivation.

The great majority of the Sindhi *haris* profess Islam as their religion and have a common type of dress usually worn by Muslims all over Sind. A large turban or *pattiko*, made of coarse cloth, is worn with or without a small cap. A small shirt or bodice, called *sadri* or *phati*, generally white or indigo-dyed, covers his body from neck to waist, while his lower limbs are encased in voluminous, baggy trousers known as *shilwar* or *suthan*. The poorer classes of cultivators wear the *kainch* or trousers of similar shape but inferior material. The shoes of the *hari*, called



Sind *hari* going out to cart

[PLATE 41

On holidays and fairs the sporting instincts of the *haris* become evident in the organization of races of bullock carts, ponies or camels. Anyone who has had the pleasure of attending the famous Horse Show at Jacobabad can testify to the excitement and enthusiasm which such contests evoke among the cultivators who travel incredible distances to witness them.

There are various indoor and outdoor games which the *hari* and his family indulge in as a mode of recreation. Cock-fighting is a common pastime in some parts of Sind and hunting with dogs or falcons helps to relieve the monotony of village life. The advent of perennial irrigation under the Barrage is likely to limit very severely the time available for such pursuits and recreations, but the ingrained love of sport in the Sindhi *hari* will persist even under conditions of more intensive agricultural practice.

The Sindhi *hari* is not without his vices. He is generally a spendthrift and improvident and, in common with his brethren in other parts of India, is often deeply in debt to the village moneylenders. He is a true Muslim in his outlook upon strong drink, but is a confirmed tobacco smoker and the *hookah* or 'hubble-bubble' is his constant companion even in the field. He is a great admirer of the opposite sex and when his admiration outruns his discretion, crimes and blood feuds become common in the district. Owing to the comparative shortage of women in Sind, such occasions are not infrequent.

With regard to his mode of living, the Sindhi cultivator likes comfort and his conditions impose simplicity upon him. His house is generally walled with mud or *odi* and is thatched with reeds and branches. In the fields, he resides in a small hut or *landhi* made of plastered reeds and thatched with straw, a similar shelter being prepared

close by for his cattle. In the centre of his hut, there is a square fireplace on which the housewife cooks the food and which keeps the inhabitants warm in winter. The *hari* and his family dislike sleeping on the ground and, in the hot summer season in particular, his bed is made up on raised platforms or *pehies*. In winter, a carpet made of rag patches known as *rillies* is used as a mattress. In the villages, the *haris'* huts are closely congested and built in clusters as a defensive precaution against thieves and dacoits. His furniture consists of a mat and *sandle* or wooden seat and a few simple utensils of brass and earthenware for cooking and storing his food.

The *haris'* food consists, as a rule, of three meals a day. *Neran* or breakfast, prepared early, is of *jowar* or *bajri* bread, which may be lightly buttered, and a bowl of *lassi* or buttermilk. *Manjhand* or lunch is generally taken at home and consists of *dal* (pulse) or vegetable. At times of special festivity or on holidays, a chicken may be added. *Lassi* is also drunk with lunch. In the evening, dinner consists of bread and vegetable with a little milk. Meat is added to the diet about three or four times a month and generally on occasions when the villagers can share in the consumption of a goat, sheep or calf. At times of festival and ceremony, a rice *pulau* of beef, mutton or chicken is provided for the feast together with sweetmeats and *gul*. The Sindhi *hari* is fond of butter and ghee, which he adds to his diet whenever it can be procured.

The Sindhi cultivator is an early riser and is punctilious about his personal cleanliness and appearance. Whenever he takes food, he washes his hands and face thoroughly before eating and rinses out his mouth after the repast is over. He invariably utters the name of God (*Bismillah*) as a grace before meals. In addition to keeping his body

clean, the *hari* is proud of his hirsute adornments and uses unguents and oils in his personal toilet.

It would not be possible to conclude this brief pen-picture of the Sind *hari* without some reference to the changing conditions of his life under perennial irrigation from the Lloyd Barrage. In pre-Barrage days, the complete dependence of the Sind cultivator on the vagaries of the river Indus and its inundation season gave rise to a fatalistic attitude towards life which has erroneously been interpreted as inertia and laziness. It was not long after the perennial water supply entered the great canals of Sind that the Sindhi cultivator began to adapt himself to the new conditions. Farming lands which do not belong to him, oppressed by poverty and debt and, in many cases, working for unsympathetic *kamdars* appointed by absentee landlords, the Sindhi *hari* has shown already that he is prepared to play his part in the development of his native land. All who have known Sind and its cultivators can testify to the worthiness and manliness of its 'sons of the soil' and must wish them a greater degree of prosperity and comfort in the years to come.

XII

THE BALUCHISTAN CULTIVATOR

By Nazeer Ahmed Janjua

BALUCHISTAN, which is composed of British Baluchistan, Tribal Areas and Baluchistan States (Kalat and Las Bela). is chiefly inhabited by the Baloch, Pathan, Brahui, Jat and Lasi tribes. The climatic conditions are very peculiar. While there are considerably cold areas which get snowfall every year, certain tracts of the province are extremely hot and have been described as the driest in the world. Due to the scarcity of water and little annual rainfall, dry farming is practised, and in years of drought most of the population migrate to Sind for their livelihood.

In this article an attempt is made to describe the various types of cultivators found in Baluchistan.

The Baloch Cultivator

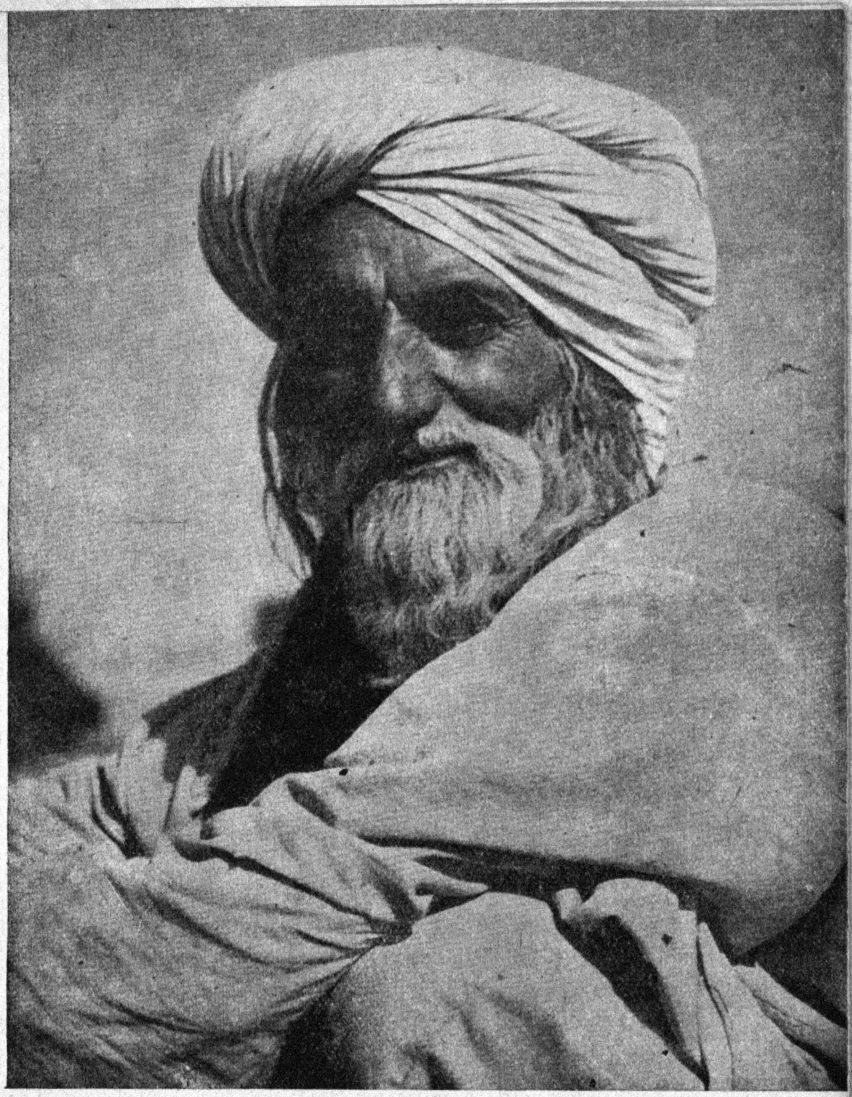
The Baloches are chiefly found in the Kalat and Kharan, but some of them also inhabit the districts of Loralai, Chaghai and Sibi. They are also found in the Marri and Bugti tribal areas. They speak the Balochi language which is akin to Persian.

The Baloch cultivator is tall and spare in appearance, temperate in his habits and endowed with great powers of endurance, being capable of sustaining prolonged fatigue on very poor food. His face is long and oval and the features aquiline. The hair is worn long in curls on either side of the face. He is frank, good-mannered, and his standard of truth and honour is high. Until comparatively recent years, the Baloches looked upon fighting as their trade and despised agriculture. The majority of

the tribesmen have now settled down to cultivate their land, and it is mainly due to the Jamalis (Rind)—a branch of the Baloches—that the Usta Colony is attaining its agricultural importance.

The Baloch cultivator wears a long *jama* like a smock frock down to the knees, *suthan* or loose trousers, a long *chaddar* or scarf, a *pagri* of cotton cloth and shoes narrow at the toe or sandals of leather or grass. He wears nothing but white and has an objection to colours of any kind. He has only two meals a day, one in the morning (*sobh naghan*) and the other at sunset (*bégáh naghan*). In the hills, wheat is the staple food grain. Maize, rice and millets are also used. In the plains, the staple food grains are *jowar* and *bajri*, the former being the most common. Most people eat their bread plain but some use milk and its preparations. Meat is eaten freely when it can be obtained. *Sajji* or mutton roasted before a wood fire is a speciality of the Baloch cultivator in the hills and is enjoyed on all special occasions. He lives in a mud hut consisting of a single room which is employed for all purposes, including its use as a cattle shed. Many of the cultivators abandon their villages in summer and erect temporary shelters in the fields. His household furniture is scanty, consisting generally of a few carpets, quilts and pillows.

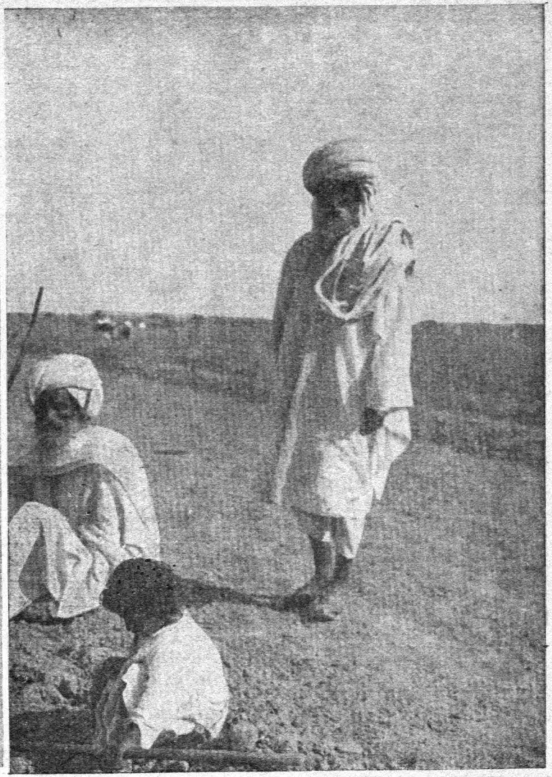
The Baloch cultivator has to pay the *lab* (bride-price) which varies according to the position of the contracting parties. With him hospitality is a sacred duty. His door is open to all comers and ever an enemy may not come to his house without being supplied with the best the host can offer. While going on a journey, he does not burden himself by carrying food but trusts to the hospitality of his neighbours. When two Baloches meet they exchange *kál*, which means the latest intelligence. Among



A Baloch cultivator

[PLATE 43

A Pathan cultivator



A Jat cultivator

his indoor games, the *chak*, a kind of chess and *hashtán chauki*, something like draughts, are most popular. The principal outdoor game is *hu*, a game resembling prisoner's base. Wrestling, horse-racing, tent-pegging and swinging form the chief amusements on festive occasions. Sometimes dances are also performed. A universal characteristic of a Baloch cultivator is the midday sleep which everyone enjoys from 12 to 3 o'clock. Another feature of his social life is the daily meeting held morning and evening in each village. He is not idle at such meetings, for if his tongue be wagging, his hands are busy in spinning goat's hair or wool or making palm leaf sandals or mats.

The principal harvests of a Baloch cultivator are the *gandim* or spring harvest (mainly wheat and barley); the *sánwanri* or autumn harvest (mainly *jowar*); and the *chétri*, that is the late or extra spring harvest (mainly *jowar* for green fodder). He depends mainly on the spring harvest and is very anxious about his crops. The first enquiries made of every traveller, after the news has been exchanged, are about the state of the crops. Most of the proprietors are themselves the tillers of the soil. Some, however, employ tenants-at-will (*rahak*) and some get their lands cultivated by their servile dependents (*bana*). To agriculture, the cultivators add sheep-farming for which they exhibit a special aptitude.

His agricultural implements are the plough (*nangar*), the plank harrow or scraper (*ken*) with which embankments are made, and the clod-crusher or log (*malav*) used in place of a roller, for breaking clods and smoothening the ground. Among minor implements may be mentioned the *ramba* or weeding spud; the *kodar* or hoe, the *dhal* or wooden spade worked with a rope by two men for making small embankments, the sickle (*das*) for reaping;

two- or four-pronged fork (*bilano*); and the *dhall* or winnowing spade. All these implements are very primitive and are made by the village artisans.

Camels, horses, donkeys and bullocks are his principal domestic animals.

The Pathan Cultivator

The Pathans (Pashtun) are found in the districts of Quetta-Pishin, Loralai, Zhob and Sibi. They speak the *Pashtu* language.

The Pathan cultivator has a broad head, fine nose and is above the mean in stature. In physique, the Achakzais are some of the finest Pathans in Baluchistan. On the whole the Pathan cultivator is inclined to be lazy and fully occupied only at the time of sowing or harvest. They leave much of their work to their women and spend most of the day gossiping.

Though the Pathans of Baluchistan ordinarily do not crop their hair in the short fashion of the Pathans in the Peshawar area, they do not wear ringlets like the Baloch but trim their locks to the nape of the neck. The Pathans' dress consists of a muslin turban (*patka* or *dastar*) tied over an Afghan conical cap (*khwalai*), a shirt (*kamis*) reaching to the knee and baggy trousers (*partuk*) which in the case of Kakars of Bori tehsil (Loralai) and Zhob district is unusually large and varies from 10 to 40 yards. In winter *postin* is very commonly used. He has only two meals daily, one in the morning (*chasht*) and the other at sunset (*masham*). Some cultivators, when at work, have a meal brought to them at midday (*gharma*). All Pathans have voracious appetites and a male adult will eat as much as 2 lb. of bread at a meal, if he can get it. Wheat is his staple food grain. He eats his bread plain and without relish, but an infusion of *krut* is sometimes poured over

the pieces to which boiling ghee is added. Buttermilk (*shalombae*) is often taken with the morning meal. Meat is seldom eaten in summer except when the inhabitants of a hamlet combine to buy a sheep or goat. The use of *landi* or dried meat is common amongst the cultivators during winter. Mulberries in their season sometimes form the staple food of the poor cultivators and fresh grapes, apricots and water-melons are also largely eaten. Tea, which was scarcely known before, is now a common luxury. Men and women eat together except among the Achakzais, who eat separately. Tobacco is used extensively for chewing and smoking. The Pathan lives in a mud hut consisting of a single room used for all purposes, including as a cattle shed. The household furniture is scanty and consists generally of a few blankets, carpets, quilts and pillows. Many of the cultivators move in summer from their mud huts into blanket tents (*kizhdi*) made of goat's hair.

The Pathan cultivator has to pay the bride-price (*walwar*) and this compels many to wait till middle age for marriage. The price varies according to the social status of the parties. Hospitality among the Pathans of Baluchistan is not so profuse as the Pathan tradition demands, and is inclined to be limited only to relations and friends. Of his amusements the only indoor game is *katar*, which resembles chess. Of his outdoor games may be mentioned *henda*, resembling prisoner's base, and wrestling, the most proficient wrestlers being the Achakzais and Tarins. *Khusae*, a hopping game, is another amusement. Dancing (*attan*) is popular among the men and women on all festive occasions.

Two principal harvests are recognized by the Pathan cultivator: the *khushbar* or *khushkbar* or spring harvest (mainly wheat and barley), the *sabzbar* or *sauzbar* (mainly maize, tobacco and melons). He depends principally

on *khushbar* crops which are called by him *ghatta fasal* or major harvest. Fruit-culture is also one of the major industries of the Achakzais, Tarins and Kakars. The majority of the Pathans are landowners and they cultivate their lands themselves but sometimes tenants are also employed.

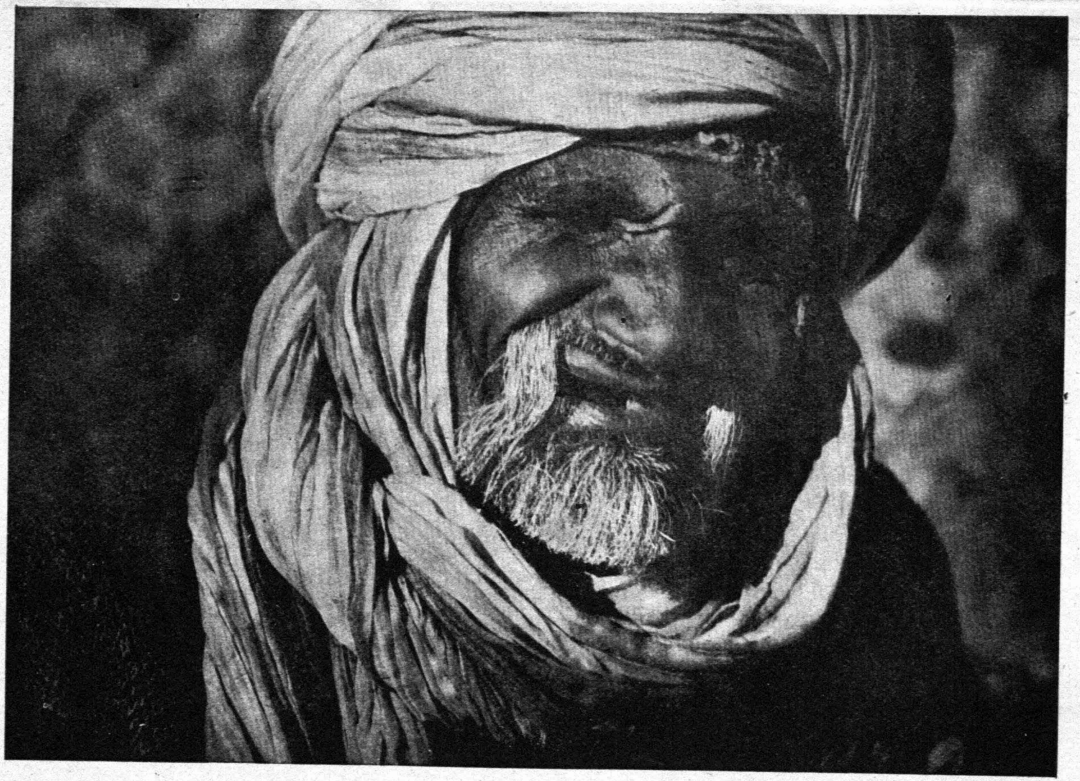
His agricultural implements and domestic animals are the same as those of the Baloches.

The Brahui Cultivator

The Brahuis are the inhabitants of Kalat State (Jhalawan, Sarawan and Kachhi) and Chaghai and Sibi districts of Baluchistan. A few are also found in the Quetta-Pishin district. They speak the Brahui language which is considered to have sprung from the same source as the Dravidian language group.

The Brahui cultivator may be described as of middle size, square built, and sinewy, with a sharp face, high cheek-bones and long, narrow eyes. His nose is thin and pointed. His manner is frank and open and his extreme ignorance is proverbial in the countryside: 'If you have never seen ignorant hobgoblins and country imps, come and look at a Brahui.' He is primarily a sheep-farmer and breeder, taking up agriculture more as a means of providing food for himself and his family and forage for his animals than with a view to sale or export. Generally thriftless, unaccustomed and disinclined to much exertion, he is unfit for the incessant and continuous work required on a farm in the busy season and so is easily discouraged by scanty rains or an unfavourable season.

The Brahui cultivator wears long hair (*pishkaw*) and always dresses in the same style, and whether it be summer or winter, freezing hard, or under a vertical sun, his entire costume consists of a loose upper white cotton garment



A Brahui cultivator

or frock (*kús*) extending nearly to the ankles and giving a disorderly appearance, cotton trousers (*shalwár*) narrow at the bottom, and a wrapper (*khéri*). For covering the head, a *chintz* cap, studded with cotton and having a small tuft or button in the centre of the crown, is in use. Over this cap, a white turban is tied. He wears sandals (*chawat*) made of leather or of dwarf palm leaves. He has only two meals a day, one in the morning (*swára*) and the other at sunset (*shám*). During the spring when milk is abundant many have only one good meal, subsisting mainly on milk for the morning meal. Wheat is his staple food grain. The poor cultivators often substitute *jowar* for wheat. Porridge made of crushed wheat or pulse and cakes of millet (*prish*) are also used. Shepherds and others who own sheep and goats use buttermilk (*khasum*) with their meals. Mulberries in their season in some places form the staple food of the poor cultivators and tobacco is extensively used for smoking and chewing. He lives either in a mud hut or huts made of tamarisk hurdles (*kudís*). Each family has usually two huts, one of which is the *ura* or family dwelling place and the other *bai* for storing fodder. Some also live in blanket tents (*gidáns*) which can be easily shifted from place to place. The household furniture is scanty, consisting generally of a few carpets, quilts and pillows.

Like the Baloch and the Pathan, the Brahui has also to pay the bride-price. Hospitality is considered a duty by him. The custom of exchanging news (*ahwal*) is common among the Brahuis as in the case of the Baloches Of his amusements, the indoor game that is most popular is *katar* which resembles chess. Mention may be made of the common amusement of the Brahui cultivator during winter of assembling by the fireside and solving riddles which are known as *chacha*. The most popular

outdoor games are *ji*, a kind of prisoner's base; *alladad*, hide and seek, wrestling (*mal*); and *tilli* which is played with bat and ball. Racing (*go*), tent-pegging (*nezabazi*) and dancing (*chhap*) are also indulged in on festive occasions. Young lads often recite ballads and play a kind of guitar called *dambura*.

The Brahui cultivator recognizes two principal harvests: the *khushbar* or *jopak* or spring harvest (mainly wheat and barley) and the *sabzbar* or *hamen* or autumn harvest (mainly *jowar*, rice, tobacco). During March and April the majority of the cultivators migrate to the hills with their flocks and herds. The cultivators are generally the landlords themselves but tenants are also frequently employed.

The Brahui uses the same type of implements as employed by the Baloch. Sheep-farming is his principal industry and he depends on it almost entirely.

The Jat Cultivator

The Jats are found in the Sibi district and Kachhi province and Domki Kaheri country of the Kalat State. They speak mixed Balochi and Sindhi, commonly known as *Jatki*. They are settled inhabitants, but the failure of crops in years of drought drives the bulk of the population to Sind in search of work.

The Jat cultivator is of fine physique. His general level of intelligence is low, but on the whole he is a better cultivator and less extravagant than his Baloch neighbour. While the Jat cultivator is enduring the sweltering heat of the sun, the Baloch is sleeping in his house. He asserts that he has been associated with the noble profession of agriculture for a very long time. *Kheti sir seti* (cultivation and personal effort) is his motto. His land and his home constitute his single interest and delight, and, in

spite of his careless hand-to-mouth existence, he is, on the whole, contented. His love for the soil and predilection for agriculture are well indicated by the following questions and answers which are commonly asked in the countryside :

'What flower is the best in the world ?'
'The best flower in the world is the cotton flower, for it covers the naked limb.'
'What footmark is the best in the world ?'
'The mark of the water is the best footmark in the world.'
'What colour is the best in the world ?'
'The colour of the earth is the best in the world.'
'What voice is the best in the world ?'
'The voice of the hand-mill is the best in the world.'
'What beak is the best in the world ?'
'The beak of the ploughshare is the best in the world.'

The Jat cultivator wears long hair like the Baloch and Brahui and his dress consists of a *tahband* or sheet wound round his waist instead of trousers, a short shirt, a turban with a small skull cap and a spotted white or red *rehu* or sheet to wrap round his shoulders. He has only two meals a day, one in the morning and the other at sunset. His staple food grain is *jowar* which is eaten with vegetables and buttermilk. Meat is eaten when it is available. The use of intoxicating liquor is not uncommon among the Jats. He lives in a mud hut with a single room. A feature of every house is a number of earthen receptacles for grain, called *gunda*, which are of several descriptions and a stand, called *tanwan*, for fowls, consisting of a log of wood fixed in the courtyard. The household furniture is scanty, consisting generally of few carpets, quilts and pillows. Unlike the other

cultivators of Baluchistan, the Jat has not to pay any brideprice. Hospitality is considered a duty by him. His amusements are generally the same as those of the Baloch. Many of the Jats are fond of wrestling (*mal*) which is similar to English wrestling. The matches are arranged regularly and are looked forward to with keen interest especially on festive occasions. Another popular amusement is the singing of *kafis* or religious poems.

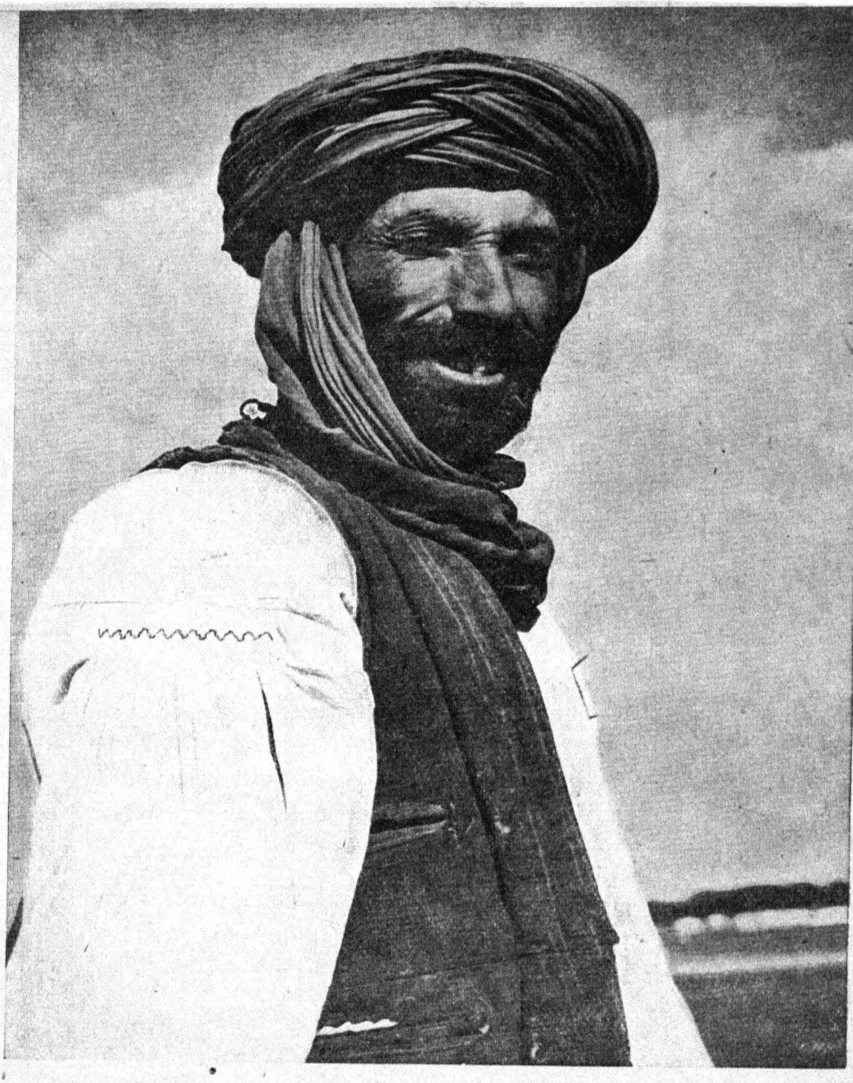
The Jat cultivator has three principal harvests, viz. *sanwanri* (mainly *jowar, bajra, mung* and *til*) ; *sarav* (mainly wheat, barley and *jhamba*) and *arhari* (mainly *jowar*, cotton and *kiring*). It is principally on the *sanwanri* and *sarav* harvests that he depends. The *arhari* harvest is of comparatively small importance, except for fodder.

His implements are the same as those of other cultivators. Amongst the domestic animals the Jats show keenness in rearing fowls. The bullocks bred by the Jats of Bhagnari are well known and have been recognized as a separate breed called the Bhagnari breed. This breed is well suited for agricultural purposes and attracts cattle dealers from the Punjab and other provinces in India.

The Lasi Cultivator

The Lasis are found exclusively in the Las Bela State and are all settled inhabitants. They are not habituated to periodic migrations like the Baloch or Brahuis but in years of drought and famine, however, they migrate temporarily to Sind and return to their homes as soon as the conditions in their country are favourable. They speak the Sindhi language.

The Lasi cultivator is above the average stature, with broad head, oval face and nose distinguished by the length of the tip. His skin is brownish and he has hazel eyes.



A Lasi cultivator

[PLATE 46

He is strong and robust. As a cultivator he is superior to the Baloch or Brahui and the name of *dehqan* is applied to him by other tribes. This signifies his long association with agriculture. From time immemorial, his style of living has been very simple, his needs few and his products barely sufficient to meet his requirements. He boasts of a means of livelihood superior to that of his neighbours and is in less straitened circumstances even at the present day. Agriculture and sheep-farming are his principal means of livelihood.

The Lasi cultivator wears long hair like the Baloch or Brahui and his dress consists of a loose *pairhan* or cotton shirt with open sleeves, a pair of indigo-blue or white cotton trousers less baggy than those of a Pathan, a cotton turban, a red or blue cotton *chádar* (wrapper), a cotton *sadri* (waistcoat) or a cotton coat and a pair of country-made leather shoes or sandals. His food consists of *jowar* mixed with *mung* or *bajra*, rice and buttermilk (*lassi*). Meat is a luxury which most of the cultivators can hardly afford more than once a week. He has two meals a day, one in the morning, consisting of *jowar* bread and buttermilk, and the second shortly after sunset, generally consisting of a porridge made of rice and *mung* seasoned with a little salt and ghee. He lives in a hut made of wooden frames and plastered with mud Light and air are admitted through a wind sail in the roof. The poor cultivator lives in a hut made of grass and reeds with a thorn enclosure round it. The household furniture is scanty, consisting of a few mats, quilts and pillows.

Nearly all the Lasi cultivators are involved in debt as they have to spend much on social customs. Marriage is a very expensive affair for him as he has to pay a heavy price for the bride. He acknowledges the

right to hospitality and never fails to entertain a stranger. The custom of taking and giving news (*hál*) prevails among the Lasis and is more or less like the Baloch custom. His most popular amusement is dancing, next to which is *arro* or wrestling. At night, the Lasi amuses himself with music and is fond of drinking *bhang* and smoking *charas*, *ganja*, etc.

The Lasi cultivator has three principal harvests: *vas* (mainly *jowar*, *mung*, *bajra* and *til*), *sarih* (mainly wheat and *sarson*) and *vándo* (mainly *jowar*, *bajra* and *mung*). It is principally on the *vas* harvest that the Lasi cultivator depends but with the produce of the *sarih* he can supplement largely his means of livelihood as *sarih* finds a ready sale. The *sarih* is regarded by him as a very valuable crop and he says '*Sarih ji var dhan ji par*,' i.e. 'He who owns a *sarih* crops possesses the foundation of wealth.' July is the busiest month for him and a local saying runs that if a man's mother dies in that month he has no time to bury her.

His implements are the same as those described before. He combines sheep-farming with agriculture and this also gives him his livelihood.

XIII

THE BURMA CULTIVATOR

By W. M. Clark

THE majority of present-day Burmese cultivators live in the heavy-rainfall, paddy-growing area of Lower Burma, but as it is impossible to dissociate an inhabitant of any country from the influences which have helped to mould him and his ancestors, the composite cultivator whose picture is drawn here has been taken as living in the hot 25 to 40-inch rainfall belt of Upper Burma.

The Lower Burman is a one-crop man, a paddy cultivator, and he grows the crop on a fertile soil under a rainfall of 90 inches or more which never fails, making of him not so much a cultivator as a paddy miner. These conditions will have their influence in the future, but the typical faults and virtues he has inherited were developed under the totally different conditions of the dry zone from which his immediate parents, grandparents or perhaps greatgrandparents came. Few Burmese cultivators in Lower Burma can carry their ancestry very far back in Lower Burma as it was only effectively occupied by them after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the rise of an export trade in rice. In the dry zone, where the Burmese people grew into a nation, the rainfall can never be relied on and crops may indeed fail, but seldom so badly as to cause actual famine. Certainty of a crop, however, can only be had by constructing irrigation works and even these depend on rather erratic streams. These are the influences which have moulded the Burman.

The Burmese cultivator is of Mongolian stock, small and lightly built (a boxer of 9 stone weight is a rarity), with high cheek-bones and wide-set eyes in a face with a light brown skin. He wears his hair long or he shaves it off, and on high days and holidays puts round his head a

gay coloured piece of cloth known as a *gaung baung*, while he dresses the remainder of his body in an equally bright-coloured skirt called a *longyi*, a white shirt and a white or dark jacket. It is one of the great joys of living in Burma that the ordinary people are so colourful in their dress and mix their colours with such great taste. It is rare indeed to meet a Burman wearing colours which clash.

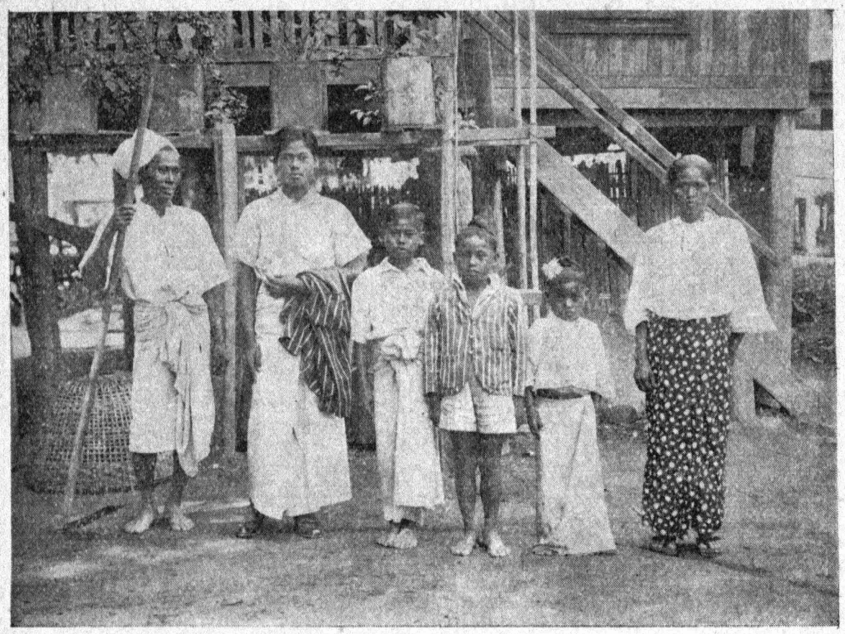
As has been indicated, the Burman is fairly certain of his food-supply and it is centuries of experience of such a state of affairs which have probably induced in him that cheerful outlook which expresses itself in his gay clothes, his casualness at times, his improvidence, but above all in his open-handed kindness. Even the poorest cultivator will put on his kettle to give a visitor a cup of tea. An officer of the Agricultural Department can speak perhaps with a greater feeling of certainty on his general trait of kindness than any other officer in Government service. It must seem astounding therefore to an outsider to hear that this land of kindly people and Buddhists has an appalling record for crimes of violence due perhaps to a lack of control that may go with a cheerful and casual nature.

The Burman's other big weakness is his love of a gamble. He is a resourceful person, as is demanded by the climate of his land, and hard-working and persistent up to a point, but his climate also allows him to gamble on getting, say a late sesamum crop; and those who can resist the temptation and work to get more certain but lower-priced crops are few and far between.

But like people in other lands, his faults and his virtues are strangely mingled and among his virtues may be counted his sense of brotherhood with other men, and the absence of caste. The rich man of today may be the

A Burmese caltivator

[PLATE 47



A Burmese cultivator and his family

[PLATE 48

poor man of tomorrow and he never thinks of holding aloof from his poorer neighbours. His riches certainly command respect and he may hold many of his neighbours in his debt, but he is never relentless, and in time of stress, as happened in the first year of the last slump, many a rich cultivator in the villages of Burma reduced his demands and gave away paddy in order to keep his poorer neighbours going. Burmans are practically all Buddhists and the instruction to give to those in need fell in Burma on fertile soil.

The slump period also showed up the Burmese cultivators' general habit of being especially kind to children. The parents might have had no food and be reduced to living on water every fourth day or so but their children never went hungry. Nothing was said, but they were made welcome round the rice bowls of their richer neighbours. Children have a happy time in Burma and may in fact be indulged too much, but, if so, it is a fault which arises from a dislike of appearing unkind and in a desire to give rather than to take so that while we may regret the results we cannot help liking the reasons for them.

The usual village in the dry zone of Burma is a collection of houses of which the uprights and perhaps the floor are made of wood, the walls of bamboo matting and the roof of grass. The floors are usually built eight feet or so above ground level and the part underneath gives space for a loom on which the women weave cotton cloth for home use and for a platform which is used in the heat of the day for sleeping on, often for meals, and frequently as a platform on which the husband and wife sit of an evening and chat with their neighbours. There also elderly men may be seen of an evening playing the quiet games of chess or dominoes common to all countries. Cultivators anywhere are usually glad to sit down at the end of the day

and it is only the young who have energy left to play the popular game of *chinlon*. This is a game in which three or more young men with their skirts tucked up to give their legs freedom stand in a circle and endeavour to keep in the air a ball made of cane work. There is no score, no gambling and no quarrels. It demands constant attention and a quick eye and is a very much more strenuous game than it looks. More recently, the English form of football has caught on in the bigger villages. Young as well as old are awake and ready to try new things. Burma is alive.

Living in an area in which resource is demanded, the Burmese cultivator has developed a fair degree of skill in his practice of growing dry crops. He appreciates the value of timing his operations to the necessities of the soil and rainfall and he will work hard and work long hours in order to take advantage of any favourable shift of the weather. He is quick to appreciate the points of a new type of plough or intercultivator, something from which an immediate advantage can be obtained, and, once convinced of its value, will immediately adopt it. But, like cultivators anywhere, he considers things for a long time before he finally decides and, very sensibly, he does not change his practice simply because a Government officer tells him it will pay him to do so. Also he is very much an individualist— probably all Buddhists are—and although he will listen to what other people may say he likes to feel he has taken a line of his own, a trait which is apt to make public meetings rather prolonged affairs.

Two photos are shown. One is a family group with the lower part of a Burmese house in the background. Note the love of flowers and the kerosene tins used as flower pots. The cultivator and his wife are typical in everything but the lady's lack of a smile. Next the

mother is a little girl. The blazers and the shorts had to be included and in their way are typical of modern Burma.

The other photo is a close-up of the husband. His head cloth is his spare *longyi* or skirt. He will bathe at midday in the one he is wearing, slip on the one now covering his long hair and wash the dirt out of the one he takes off. Tomorrow he will have the *longyi*, not in the picture, as a head cloth and be wearing the one now on his head. The pipe and the safety pin are modern touches.

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